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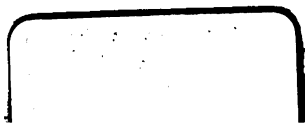
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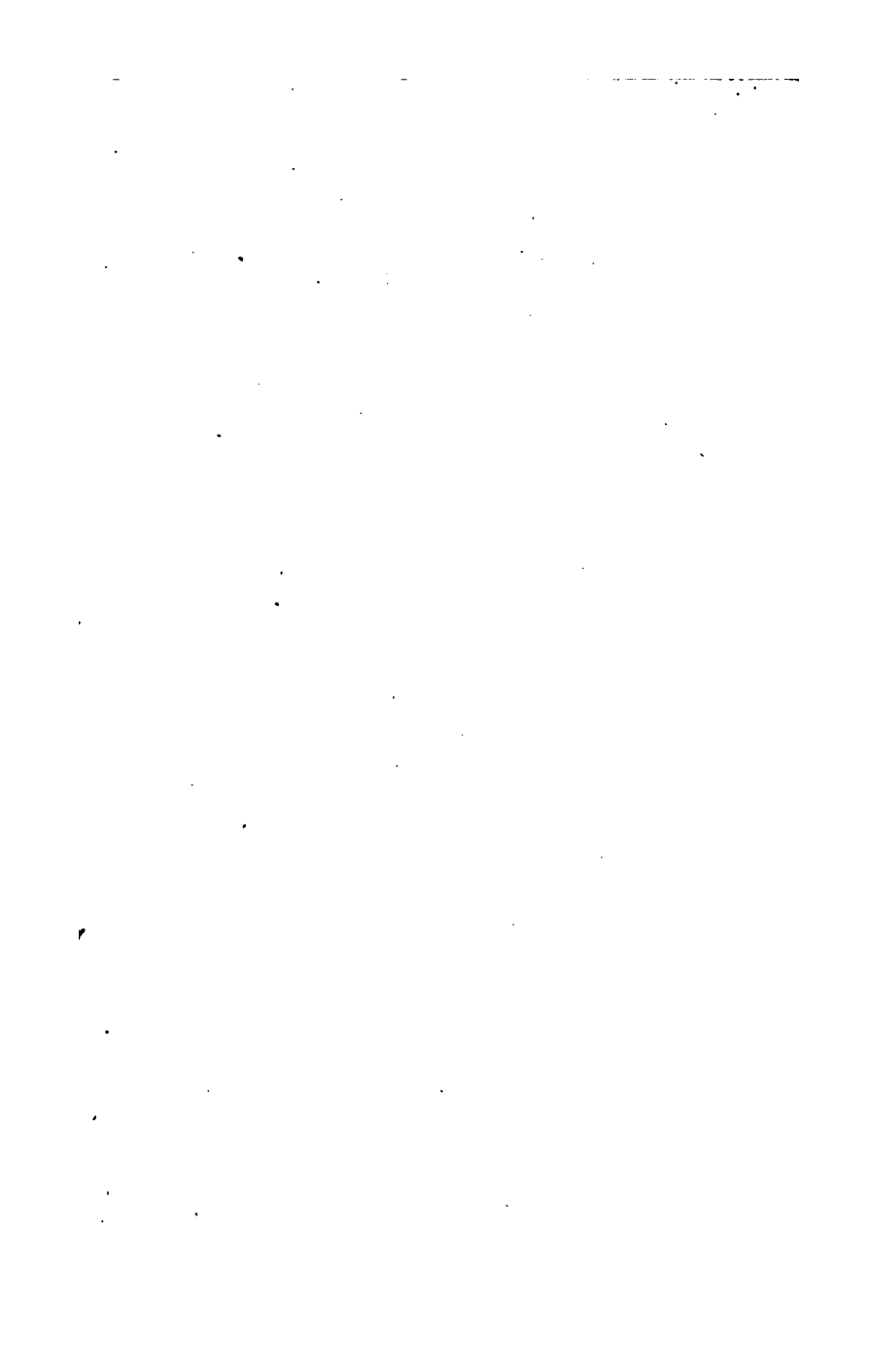
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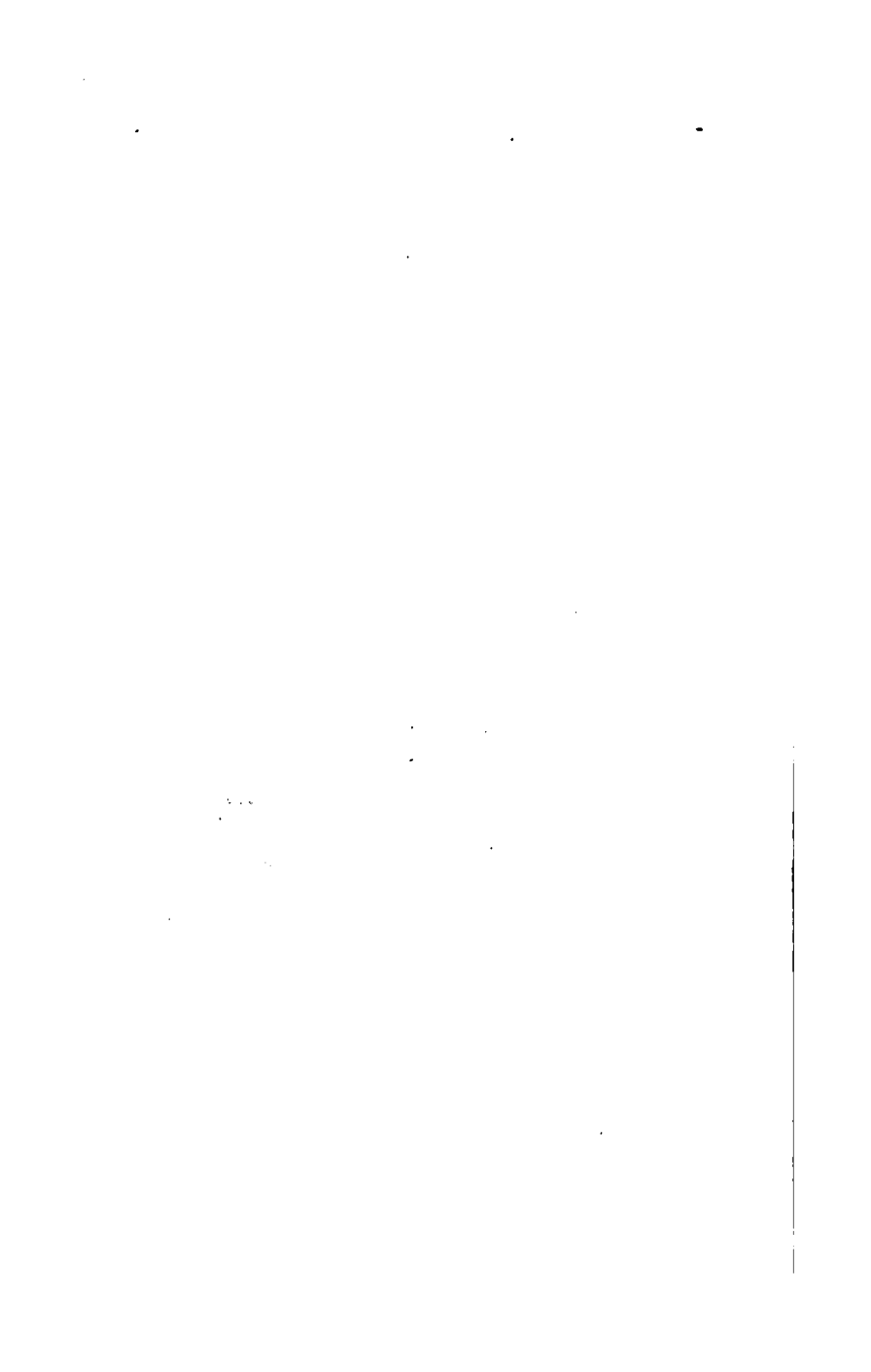


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FEMALE IMPROVEMENT.

BY

MRS. JOHN SANDFORD,

AUTHOR OF

"WOMAN IN HER SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC CHARACTER."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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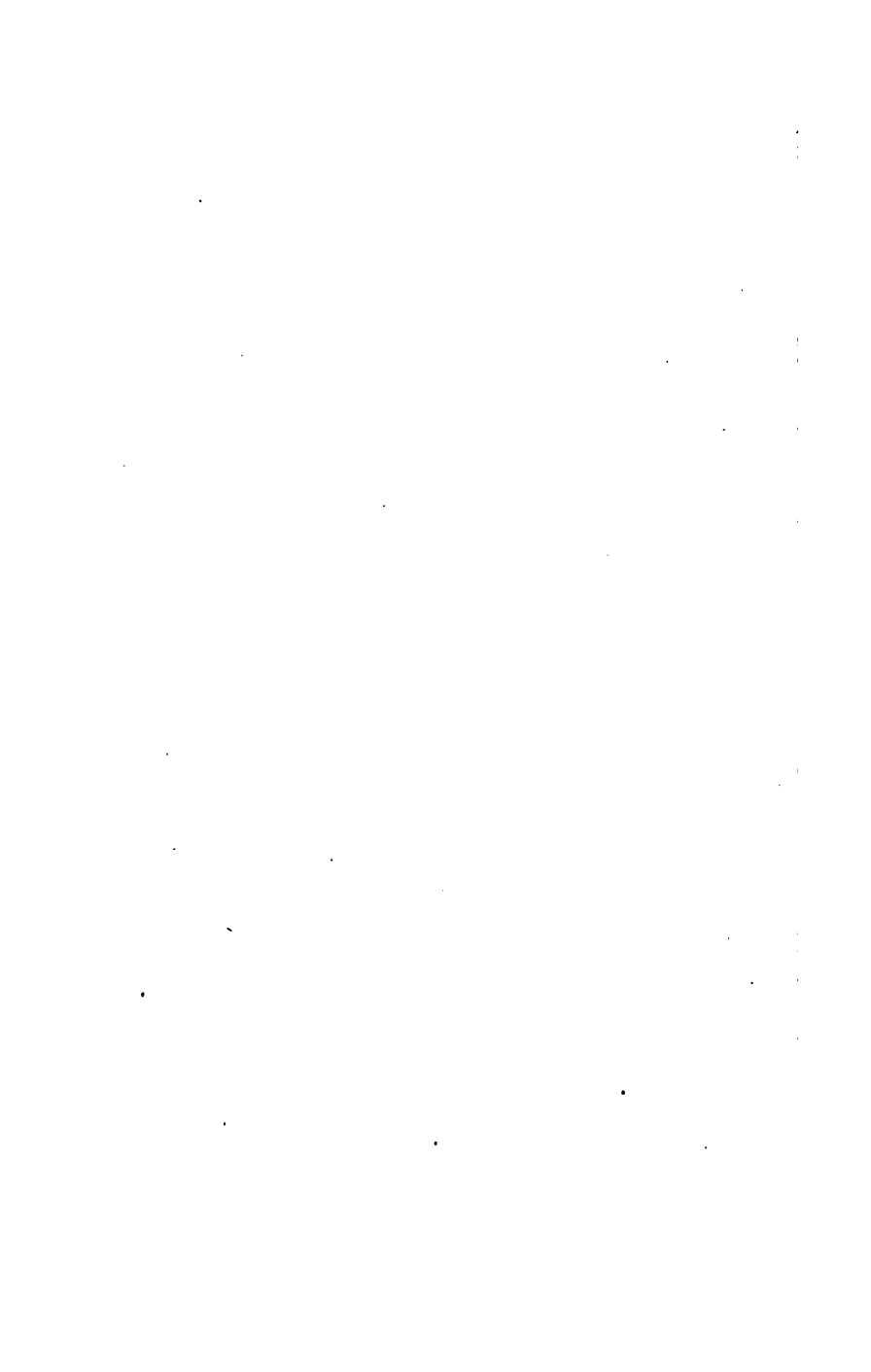
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OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

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By the same Author,

LIVES

OF

**LADY JANE GREY AND MRS. COLONEL
HUTCHINSON.**

**WOMAN, IN HER SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC
CHARACTER.**

Fourth Edition.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE favorable reception of a former work may account for the appearance of the present Volumes. They contain the Authoress's fuller and more matured opinions upon some points touched upon in her previous publication :— they also embrace many new and important topics.

It is with much humility that they are offered to the public. They have been composed at intervals, so as not to interfere with maternal and domestic duties, or with the offices which devolve on every Clergyman's wife. But they are the fruits of study and reflection, without which they could not claim attention. The Authoress has advanced no

sentiment which has not been duly weighed ; and she asks from the reader that indulgence which will never be refused to a female pen.

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She knows that they will receive her offering with sisterly kindness ; and she asks them to unite with her in humble prayer that, by the Divine blessing, these volumes may subserve the cause so dear to all their hearts.

London, May, 1836.

FEMALE IMPROVEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

FORMATION OF FEMALE CHARACTER.

It has been remarked that the female mind arrives sooner at its maturity than that of the other sex: and experience seems to furnish ground for this conclusion. The intellect of woman, though its range is confined, is capable of rapid advance; and the address with which she is gifted often gains for her the credit of a proficiency to which she has scarcely attained. On this account the girl of seventeen frequently appears in advantageous contrast with the youth of the same age; and, in spite of his superior education and real attainment, we find her a more agreeable, and even a more intelligent companion.

It may, indeed, be questioned whether this superiority is real or only apparent; whether it is not the grace and naïveté of the young woman that cause her, at this season of her life, to bear away the palm. But however this may be, she is soon distanced. The next few years bring forth the vigour of the manly mind, whilst the intellect of woman makes little or no progress, and in many cases, only loses its liveliness with its bloom.

Whatever, therefore, be the comparative advance of the male and female understanding, we may inquire whether the seeming maturity of the latter does not act as a check to its improvement, and whether discipline and education are not often regarded as concluded, when they ought rather to be reckoned, as at their most important and interesting stage.

The formation of character is the great end of all instruction. It is also the result by which we are disposed to judge of the system which has been pursued. For, though education, like other moral influences, is uncertain in its operation, the probabilities of its efficiency are so much in its favour, that we cannot but attribute

a failure in its success, to some fault in its principle or conduct. And when the fault is palpable, can we be surprised that its consequences should be equally obvious?

Judging, then, from what we should conceive would be the intellectual process in advancing towards maturity, an early and abrupt intermission of culture must be alike prejudicial to man and woman. We would say, indeed, that whatever may be the apparent precociousness of the female mind, it needs a longer continuance of training than that of the other sex. However promising its early blossoms may be, it has not the internal strength; and unless this is infused, the result must be disappointing.

Yet the education of woman is, in many cases, suddenly and almost mechanically arrested. The school-room machinery is, all at once, let down; and no new power is applied to keep up the action. Age alone determines the period of the change. At a prescribed season, the young woman, as a matter of course, is emancipated from tutelage, and introduced into society. There is then an end, not merely of all instruction, but frequently of all acquire-

ment. And the preparation for this change may be peculiarly defective. There may be no attempt made to render the scholar independent, to impart a habit of thought, a desire for knowledge, or a love of study. And thus, when the restraint is taken off, there is no voluntary application. The next year or two will be probably wasted in trifling pursuits; and if regret then follows the recollection of the time that has been lost, it may be, in great measure, unavailing, for the habit of intellectual employment has been interrupted, or other engagements have intervened.

Thus the mind is stunted in its growth, and the most valuable faculties may never be fully developed. Of course the effect is sufficiently obvious. With much that is amiable and intelligent, we yet frequently see in woman an incompleteness of character. There may be no defect in talent or capacity; but there is a want of strength and consistency, a deficiency in judgment and in power.

This is, perhaps, not discerned in the common intercourse of social life. The manners of society are calculated to throw a veil over the

intellectual character. And conversation is so much, and often, it would seem, so unavoidably, confined to common-place subjects, that an ordinary share of address may carry any young person safely through the ceremonial of a call or a dinner. But when topics of greater moment are introduced, when remarks are hazarded on subjects which scarcely fall within the compass of the drawing-room, the deficiency will then be perceived. We shall find that opinions have been acquiesced in through indolence; that the judgment has not been exercised on any except trivial questions; and that sentiments are adopted, or opposed, from impulse or from prejudice, rather than as the result of deliberation and conviction.

And this may be the case with reference to subjects, which professedly have been points of special attention. With regard, for instance, to religion: we cannot now say, as we might justly have remarked a century ago, that religious instruction, at least in its elements, does not form a part of early female education. Whilst there may be much that is faulty in the manner of communicating it, and much that is

defective in the system that is taught, still the subject is admitted by all as an essential branch of tuition.

Yet religion is a point, in approaching which, in social intercourse, persons of real reflection are, perhaps, the most generally disappointed. The notions entertained on it by women appear often to be received only second-hand, and to be by no means the result of actual thought or of personal investigation. A little girl fresh from the school-room may give a tolerable account of her creed, because it is newly learnt, and because we expect her to present to us only a transcript of her instructions. But the religion of a young woman should be more than a mere lesson, or a borrowed opinion. It should be more than a fashionable system, or a speculative conceit. If it involves responsibilities which cannot be delegated, and interests for which each must herself provide, it is surely a matter for our individual inquiry, and on which we all should prepare ourselves to think.

Here, however, we may too frequently observe that personal reflection has not been exercised. Opinions may be repudiated when

conveyed in an obnoxious phraseology, which, when clothed in a more alluring garb, will be unsuspectingly received. Or theories of questionable authority, when put forth with confidence, will find unhesitating acceptance, whilst the more diffident advocate for truth obtains far less implicit credence. And even,—so little may the understanding be informed, or the judgment enlightened,—an assent will be readily accorded to quite contradictory statements; and we are made to feel how little dependence can be placed on principles, which are professed, without being understood.

It may be said, however, that such indecision and ignorance on religious subjects, are rather a moral than an intellectual fault; that they proceed, not from a defect in the conduct of mind, but from the want of that superinduced principle which is the origin of all spiritual knowledge:—that they are, in short, not the result of controllable causes, but of the deprivation of that one efficient influence to which we are alone indebted for the formation of religious character. To this we can only reply, that the remarks that have been made are simply prac-

tical, and that they in no degree interfere with the doctrine of Spiritual Influence. Divine Grace is, indeed, the only effectual teacher, and often does it impart that lucid order in matters of heavenly science, which marks the proficient in Christian attainment. But the mind that is under proper discipline, is in a state far more favourable to the reception of religious truth than one, the energies of which are not in full and healthy action. The spiritual appeal is usually made by the instrumentality of ordinary influences; and, in proportion as the faculties of mind are in a vigorous state, they are accessible to the persuasions of truth. On the contrary, the undisciplined mind presents no free and open ground for the power of convincing; it is altogether uncertain; for, in religion, and in every other subject, the best cause is fairly and honestly decided, only when it can refer to the award of a sound and efficient judgment.

Want of thought is one great cause of the weakness lamented. The mind can never attain to its maturity that is not exercised by thinking. On this account the course prescribed

to men is one of severe application. The knowledge they acquire is valuable, not for its own sake alone, but because it involves study. And why is it that those, who have earned the academic honours of youth, usually make good the promise of their early years? Is it because they are familiar with books which, in after-life, they may never look into? Is there an intrinsic charm in Aristotle, Æschylus, or Pindar; or does not their virtue mainly consist, in the thought which they call forth, and in the application which is required for their mastery?

We do not mean to suggest such studies to young women. It is said, indeed, that the Greek Chair at Bologna was once filled by a female Professor, and that she bore her learning and her honours with feminine grace: but we do not propose her as a model. Yet we may assuredly ask, is it not of the utmost importance that the female mind should not be suffered to lie fallow in its prime; and that the pains bestowed upon its early culture should not be lost by subsequent inaction?

We often hear of the frivolity of the sex. We hear it laid to the charge of women, that unless they have family duties, they seem to

have no pursuits: that with no deficiency of intelligence they have yet little desire for improvement; and that it is not easy to excite their interest in any thing beyond a book of entertainment, or the occurrences of the day. But we can scarcely be surprised at this, when we recollect how the years of youthful energy are often spent. It is a bright season, youth; a season when the understanding is in its full play; when, like every other faculty, it has pleasure in putting forth its powers, and when the very consciousness of vigorous action is itself a happiness. Yet this season is often frittered away in pursuits which are worse than useless. The character which has just begun to develop itself, — the mind which has just discovered its own capabilities, — are treated as if they had reached perfection, and as if further care and further discipline were not required. Can we then wonder that the work is incomplete, — that the movement is even retrograde, — and that the young girl, fresh from the school-room, is sometimes a more interesting and intellectual person than the full-grown woman?

Youth is confessedly the golden season of life. To none is it more eminently so than to the young woman. Freed, for a while, from care,—full of life and hope,—capable of exertion,—conscious of vigour, she has only to apply her energies to what is good, and she may taste some of the highest and purest pleasures which bless the human path. Ambition tempts her not with its poisoned cup; neither, though the taint of sin is in her heart, need the evil tendency be excited and increased by collision with the world. Who does not wish to recall that joyous time; and, though not to live it over again as it was spent,—for, like every period of this sad pilgrimage, it is marked with grief, and pain, and folly,—yet, who would not desire to experience once more the same freshness, the same glow, the same animation,—to rise once more with the same elasticity,—and to feel that the morning of life is bright with promise, and that the early sun of hope is flinging its roseate hues upon the opening prospect? The enchantment is gone by,—the vision is departed,—the sober realities of existence have dispelled the



illusion, and the spring of the young and sanguine mind is for ever fled.

But is a period so favourable to attainment and to progress to be lost? It is the season of hope:—not only *that*;—it is the time when reason gathers strength, and when the mind is first capable of judgment. Childhood can learn: but its powers are chiefly mechanical and imitative. Reason, we all know, is of the latest growth. We may remark this even in our nurseries. The infant that is quite capable of intimating its wishes, is yet at a loss when required to compare; and tries to grasp *all*, or gives its preference by chance. And we may observe, too, that it is the imperfection of the discriminating and deliberative faculties that chiefly constitutes the intellectual weakness of childhood. We are often surprised at the facility with which very young people acquire, and are again disappointed at their inability to think and judge. Possibly memory may be in the fullest exercise, when the powers of the mind are concentrated in the mechanical process, and when the higher faculties are, comparatively with a later period, lying

dormant. But, however this may be, youth is the time when all that has been stored away in childhood is first applied, and brought to use. It is the time when, both in opinion and in action, discernment begins to be exercised. And it is therefore the time of all others, when it is important to give a right direction to the judgment, and to instruct and discipline the pilot that is in future to guide the helm.

Let it not be said that women are incapable of reasoning, and that their deficiency in this respect is not the result of false treatment, but is innate and organic. If there is a weakness in the sex,—if they are apt to decide capriciously and from impulse,—if sometimes they even seem incapable of that intellectual stretch which is essential for the process of serious thought,—is this not to be ascribed rather to the little care that is taken to teach and train their mind at the most critical period of its growth? At a time when young men are undergoing the strictest discipline,—when many of their studies are expressly for the purpose of strengthening the mind,—young women, as we have seen, are for the most

part allowed to consider that they have nothing further to do in the way of education. In many cases, so far from being encouraged to bend their attention to profitable application, and invigorate their understandings by wholesome exercise, a thousand frivolous interruptions are forced upon them; and they find themselves involved in company and engagements, to the sacrifice of their time, the enervation of their character, and the prevention of their further progress. Is it then matter of surprise, that they should yield to the idleness to which youth is naturally prone, and should omit to impose on themselves that discipline which their instructors seem to regard as no longer essential?

This neglect of the season of adolescence is to be lamented on many accounts; on none more, than because youth is the period when sentiment is first felt, and taste developed. The mind of a child is scarcely susceptible of poetry. Let us recall ourselves the first impressions of its influence—the first opening of nature to our eyes—the first perception of beauty. Was it not at that period when we first put away childish things? Were we not then sensible

of emotions to which, hitherto, we had been strangers; and can we not now recollect the delighted surprise with which we welcomed our new capacity of intellectual pleasure? The landscape burst upon us with the blush of spring; and, together with our appreciation of its loveliness, came all those fine and delicate perceptions, which, if sometimes the cause of much pain, are the source of some of our sweetest enjoyments, and the breathings of our more exalted nature. It was then, too, that we first felt the enchanter's wand, that our hearts kindled with the poetic fire, and that the immortal numbers, as they fell in music on our ears, awoke a chord of sympathy within our breasts.

We knew not what poetry was till then—the poetry of nature or of art; and though we had gamboled on the green turf, and plucked the summer flowers, and drank in the freshness of the evening breeze, we were insensible to the inspiration which lends to external beauty the charm of sentiment.

As yet our minds had not tasted the concep-

tions of the poet. In vain had we been taught to render homage to the immortal bards; in vain did the assiduity of our teachers cull for us the most delicious blossoms, and endeavour to tempt our steps to the Pierian spring. The sense was yet to be acquired, the appetite yet to be excited: and though we had gone through every gradation, from the nursery rhymes to the epic song, yet the sublimity and the pathos of the celestial art were equally unfelt, and Milton and Gray, Dante and Petrarcha, were recollected only as affording material for a lesson.

But to a mind that is at all susceptible of the higher emotions, the sentiment for poetry is called forth at the time when the other intellectual faculties are advancing to maturity. The latent enthusiasm is then excited; the golden tint, with which nature is invested, then seems to be reflected back to us in the mystic numbers; and the emotions, of which the heart is full, find their transcript and expression in the poetic page. The stores, too, of imagination are unsealed; literature affords new and untasted enjoyments: and the sensibilities of the

mind become more acute by collision with sympathies, to which the inspiration of the bard has given utterance.

But it may be said that this sudden accession of taste is by no means universal; for that minds of ordinary stamp are at no period distinguished by such elevation. Granting, however, that the view that has been expressed may be somewhat exaggerated, and true in its extent only in particular instances; granting, too, on the other hand, that there may be a far earlier development of poetic feeling, and that the infant bard may “lisp in numbers;” yet it can scarcely be questioned but that there is in youth a susceptibility of fine impressions, and of sentiments which belong, at least, to the poetic. Imagination and feeling are in full play; they have, as yet, received no check: no discordant string has jarred upon the sensibilities, or destroyed the harmony, of the young and happy mind.

But, if it be so, — if youth be the period of sentiment, how important that the flame thus kindled should burn in its purity, and should be supplied with fitting nourishment! On this the future well-being much depends. For the

poetic sensibility is not a mere intellectual taste; it involves a state of feeling which bears materially upon the character: nursed and petted into a morbid irritability, or chastened into a pure and holy sentiment, it becomes either a source of misery, or a spring of noble and virtuous action.

There is, indeed, no reason to complain that the taste of which we have been speaking is not sufficiently called forth. The danger rather is, lest it should be excessively and injudiciously stimulated; and the more so, as the nature of the excitement is sometimes very questionable. The food so abundantly supplied, and swallowed even to surfeit, is calculated rather to induce fever, than to call forth a healthful energy. It is apt, too, to render a more wholesome diet unpalatable. Works of fiction, when they form, as it is to be feared they too frequently do, the almost entire reading of young women, pamper both the taste and fancy, and, far from inspiring a delicacy of feeling, blunt even the natural sensibilities. It is not merely that the imagination is by them too exclusively brought into play; nor is it that the

moral tendency of much of this captivating literature is far from good; nor is it that it engrosses time which might be more profitably spent: but, when the novel is the only refuge in a wet day, the only panacea against ennui, the only substitute for company, the feelings, from a perpetual application of a false stimulus, lose by degrees their tone, and the mind acquires a listless habit which incapacitates it for even ordinary exertion.

Such reading, too, contributes nothing towards what ought to be the paramount object, as well with young people themselves as with their parents and instructors; namely, the formation of their character. For this end, the education of childhood has been merely preliminary. As a preparation, indeed, early discipline is essential; but it is only a first step. And let us not expect too much from childhood. Let us not seek to make our children little women, whilst our women are often nothing better than grown girls. Let us not force the earliest shoots by over culture, and relax our care when the young plant begins to put forth its strength.

Childhood may be too much burdened: the

elasticity of the spirit may be broken down, and the mind fatigued with unremitting application. The expediency of such early and unrelaxing restraint is surely very questionable. And, if such be the system pursued in the first years, it is the more inconsistent to loose the reins all at once, and to leave the mind, which has hitherto implicitly leant on the guidance of others, entirely, and suddenly, to its own resources and its own conduct.

Frivolity of character is but the too natural consequence of such a system. The occupations that supersede the engagements of the school-room are not calculated to improve the mind. Masters and lessons are given up; and visiting, shopping, light reading, and the more trivial accomplishments, are, too often, all that are substituted in their place. For every circumstance and condition there is ever ready some engrossing trifle: and the construction of a purse or the embroidering a waistcoat are amongst the most important avocations of the day.

We can expect no intellectual superiority from those who are thus habituated to pass their

time. It is not surprising if, in conversation, they discover few symptoms of thought, and little or no interest in subjects which require reflection. But we must regret that their powers are thus wasted, and their abilities misapplied. For the end of life is not mere existence; neither is it selfish and passing gratification. Women, as well as men, have high and holy duties. They have much to learn, to suffer, and to do. If it is not their's to engage in the most stirring concerns, their offices equally require elevation and energy of mind. And, whatever be their station, they are not exempt from obligations which demand intellectual and moral effort; neither may they be content to pass through their pilgrimage here, the indolent recipients of external impressions.

If we observe who they are, among women, who really obtain the respect of society, we shall find them firm in purpose, and vigorous in action; their enthusiasm chastened by judgment, their energy by feminine conduct and taste.

Nor can we admit that the highest qualities, moral and intellectual, are not needed in the routine of life; or that a woman possessed

of them finds her place only in singular circumstances. There is not a duty which one so gifted will not fulfil better than a merely ordinary person. The piety of the daughter, the devotion of the wife, the self-denial of the mother, the patience of the nurse,—these and such like graces will be exhibited by her in all their unpretending excellence; and there will be in her a readiness and a power to carry through every important undertaking, and to meet every emergency.

Contrast the points of her character with those of the mere trifler: the true generosity of the one with the selfishness of the other; the enthusiasm of the one with the inanity of the other; the ability of the one with the unprofitableness of the other. In whatever way the difference is viewed, whether in the superiority of endurance over restless anxiety, of forbearance over teasing and meddling impatience, of buoyancy of spirit over nervous weakness, it is at once the test and proof of a woman's worth. Either she is a mere toy, the plaything of an hour, which loses at once its beauty and its value; or she is a gem, the brilliancy of which fades not by long possession, and the preciousness of

which is not deteriorated by fashion or caprice.

It is for a young woman to make her choice ; to decide between the short butterfly existence of a few seasons, and a life worthy an intellectual and immortal being ; between the admiration of an hour, and the love of years ; between passing pleasure and lasting happiness. For on the use she makes of her early energies, — on the conduct of her mind, when it is capable of the most vigorous action, — on the discipline of her heart when it is susceptible of the most lively impressions, will mainly depend what she will henceforth be. She will either be the mere unit, whose individuality is scarcely recognised in the sum of human existence ; or she will fulfil the end of her creation, and, as far as her influence extends, benefit her fellow creatures. She will either be the trifler, that flutters past ; is seen, admired, and forgotten ; or the rational, intelligent, and religious woman, happy in the consciousness of doing good, and blessed in the belief that, amongst those whom it is her virtuous ambition to please, she is, herself, not unvalued.

CHAPTER II.

RELIGION,—A RULING PRINCIPLE.

It may be remarked, that unity of purpose is one of the usual characteristics of a superior mind. To have one end in view, to be guided by one principle, to which other motives, however powerful, are still subordinate, is the part of the truly wise. We may learn this from observing who it is that are most successful in the world; and from contrasting their steadiness of design, and patience in execution, with the instability of others who attain to no eminence. It seems, indeed, that the concentration of our faculties is essential to their energy; and that, unless they are made to bear upon some definite and permanent object, they are never fully developed.

Nothing is more important in the discipline of the mind than an attention to this principle. It is notorious how much more we acquire, and

how much more valuable is our acquisition to us, when we have a fixed end in view, than when we learn without reference to a special purpose. In the former case, all our faculties are awake ; we are ever on the look-out for information ; and we treasure up all that we can glean from observation or research, for the purpose of extracting from it what may subserve our favourite object. On the contrary, when our strokes are aimless, their result is unsatisfactory ; and, though we may gain some knowledge in a desultory way, there is a want of arrangement in our materials, and even of accuracy in our information, which detracts greatly from their value. In short, we are apt to learn to but little purpose, unless we learn for a specific end ; and unless, in the culture of our intellectual faculties, we are stimulated by the prospect of a goal, to which our efforts, however various, are all directed.

If this principle be true as it regards the regulation of the mind, we may be disposed to admit it with reference to conduct generally. Unity of design is the best guarantee for consistency. It is when we act upon principle ;

when our desires centre mainly in the attainment of one object, that we pursue a steady course, and succeed not merely in our immediate aim, but render ourselves better qualified to arrive at general excellence. We feel then that we are in earnest; we understand ourselves, and our motives; the spring of action, whatever it may be, imparts energy to our character; and our moral and intellectual faculties, our passions and affections, all receive that impulse which insures their co-operation, and their relative subserviency to each other.

The more disposed we are to admit this, the more sensible shall we be of the importance attaching to the choice of the principle which is thus to bear so materially upon conduct. From it character will take its tone; on it depend the sensibility of the moral feelings, the complexion of the mind, the bearing of the actions, and, lastly, our notions of happiness. It, in short, in great measure determines what we shall be; and though it may, in itself, admit of modification, or be liable to change,—though it may be for a while lost sight of, or may yield a temporary subjection to some other potent and pre-

sent influence, yet it will resume its sway, and, like the master passion, gather strength even from a temporary suspension of its powers.

There are certain principles which are from their nature so engrossing, that, if their influence be really admitted, they must be predominant and paramount.

Such a principle, pre-eminently, is Religion. Whatever sway other sentiments may have acquired, this, when recognised, must be supreme. Not that Religion disallows other springs of conduct. Having established her claim to the first place, she acts upon subordinate motives, — which are the natural and immediate causes of ordinary actions, — chiefly as a check.

There is no sentiment which, in its nature, extent, and influence, is so akin to Religion as Love. Religion, in fact, is love; love of the highest order—spiritual, and permanent as to the object on which it is placed. Religion is as engrossing as Love—the main-spring of conduct, the abiding influence which animates the soul, stimulates to exertion, and controls other and inferior feelings. Religion, like Love, has its seat in the heart: its appeals are

addressed to it; its impressions are all there; it is from thence that it sends forth the rays, which vivify the system.

Yet the circumstance of Religion being so akin to Love, and of the affections being so much involved in it, may be the cause of self-delusion with regard to the reality of its influence: It is possible to mistake earthly passion for pure and spiritual feeling; and what is merely a human sentiment, for that high and holy love, which has heaven for its source, and God only for its object. And, no doubt, it is the gentler sex who are the most liable to such an error. All women, it is said by one who well knew the female heart, love, have loved, or are capable of loving. Love is the warm enthusiasm which, in youth especially, glows in their hearts, and renders them susceptible of every tender emotion. They love the natural creation; they love all that is morally amiable; they live to love. True, the sentiment may be elevated, the natural impulse may become a holy aspiration, and the tender confiding spirit may find in Heaven the sympathy it longs for, and seek the home of its affections there:—but it may be

otherwise,—and then the passion that has been nurtured by false impressions, and under a false name, subsides, and shows its fallacy by its transitoriness, or it assumes some different aspect, and produces results unsatisfactory or prejudicial.

But, though spiritual affection may have its counterfeit, religion is not the less a sentiment of love. And as the object of it is infinitely higher than that of any other sentiment, so the homage rendered ought to be proportionably intense.

It is the regarding of religion in this light that explains to us the obligation of its being a paramount principle. What human being is satisfied with a divided heart? Is the friend—the lover—the parent—or the husband? Even the gradations that must obtain—the gradations which nature dictates, and reason and duty sanction—prove to us, still more clearly, that Heaven must have the highest place. If it has not this, it has nothing: if the object of religious faith be not welcomed to the heart with supreme preference,—if the breathings of the spirit towards its heavenly Lord be not “whom do I desire in comparison of thee?”—religion is

yet unknown ; the love of God is yet unfelt ; the noblest sentiment that can fill the breast is yet a stranger to the bosom ; and that principle, which is the one true source of virtue and happiness, has not yet shed its gracious influence on the soul.

Philosophy could teach this, when it placed the sum of duty and enjoyment in the contemplation of the Divine Essence. Reason can teach this, when, tracing the Creator through his works, she recognises him as the source of goodness, and confesses him worthy the highest tribute which the heart can pay. And Nature teaches this, in the secret longings of the soul for unseen and untasted perfection,—longings which no created good can satiate, and which are the silent but sure indications of the existence of an object capable of satisfying this immortal thirst. But, oh ! much more does Christianity teach this, when to the expectant spirit it displays the unveiled fulness of the Deity, the glorious vision of Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, clad in mortal flesh, and interesting the human heart by means of its tenderest sympathies and

purest affections. It is Christianity, the messenger of good tidings, the harbinger of peace, that claims the vacant throne in our affections for Him, whom she reveals in the plenitude of his glory and his condescension, the High and Holy One whom angels worship, and the Saviour and Friend of man; the Creator of the universe, and the sinless participator in human infirmity.

Christianity must therefore be a ruling principle; it must occupy the chief place: it would be an affront to offer it any other. And what is there so worthy? If the philosopher of old, by the faint glimmerings which he caught of the divine effulgence, perceived that the fruition of Deity alone could satisfy the craving of the spirit, and ought to be the first aim of the sentient being; how much more may the Christian feel, to whom the gates of heaven are opened wide, that the religion which the Bible reveals ought to have the pre-eminence!

It is from not understanding the nature, and considering the claims, of religion, that the ideas which prevail upon the subject are often so vague. Some profession of it is deemed requi-

site: as it respects women, religion is viewed, in the worldly estimate, as a decency and propriety which it is not becoming to neglect. But what is it which, according to this standard, is thought to constitute religion? A few solitary actions which have no bearing upon character, which are performed as a mere punctilio, and which, so far from themselves really involving religion, are useful only as they may possibly contribute to the formation of a religious principle within the breast.

A young woman, for instance, will be called religious if she appears regularly at the house of worship. She may have devoted the week to the world; but if she retain some scruples with reference to the Sabbath, and obey the periodical summons to the house of God, she obtains credit for a due regard to religious duties. Doubtless, the effort is praiseworthy: it may demand the sacrifice of an hour's sleep, or a morning's amusement. And the service itself must not be undervalued: it may be made a means of spiritual benefit, and produce results such as were not contemplated by the formalist herself.

But it cannot be imagined, that such an act, in itself, has virtue to convey the stamp of religion to the character; that the mere compliance with an ordinance constitutes piety. It may be a decency, or a superstition; but assuredly it is not religion. Religion is nothing less than the rendering to God the chief place in the affections, and the taking his will as the ruling principle of life.

The same remark applies to all other external services. The means of religious instruction and improvement are too frequently mistaken for their end. Some rest their claims to piety on an attendance on the Lord's table; others, on the daily reading of the Scriptures; others, on family or private devotion. The more spiritual the office, the more reason we have to hope that the wish to perform it proceeds from a spiritual principle; but its mere observance argues nothing. A blessing may, indeed, attend its practice;—even in a formal routine of religious service the flame may be kindled; and the heartless ceremony become the devout exercise. And so often does a conscientious performance of external duties result in an

internal enlightenment, that we would fain believe that there are links in the chain of heavenly mercy more than we know of; and that the grain of mustard seed, in its minuteness, as well as in its growth, is but a faint emblem of the embryo principle of divine grace.

Still religion consists not in form; neither is it an iteration of isolated duties. It is a principle which prevails, not for an hour or a day; but which is continually present; and which, by enlightening the conscience, restores to it its functions, and renders it an habitual and a faithful guide.

It is by considering what religion really is, that we are enabled to correct some misconceptions with regard to it. To value its excellence, an infused taste is requisite. Still many may be deterred from even an approach to piety by the uninviting aspect under which they view it. They imagine it a sort of Brahminical superstition, enjoining all that is irksome, prohibiting all that is agreeable, and proportioning its rewards to the number and extent of its self-denying services.

This is indeed different from the true portraiture of religion. Religion, from its capacity to inspire happiness, invites especially the young and ardent mind. It is, as we have seen in its nature, a service of love; and unless cheerfully rendered, it is of no avail. Far from proscribing enjoyment, it is religion which leads to the fountain of all joy; which elevates to spiritual pleasures, and gives a purer relish for the blessings which we meet with here; and which alone teaches us how to gather from created good its sweets, and to reject its mischief.

Religion, however, to be thus effective, must be felt as the source and spring of happiness, as the influence which is to guide and gladden us here, and the hope which gives to the future a bright and glorious aspect. Its paramount importance must be established as essential; and we must feel it our first duty to understand religion as a revelation, and to conform to it as a rule of life. It must, in short, be chief in our considerations; so that it may act as an habitual curb or motive, and be taken into account under every circumstance.

The magnitude of the interests involved in religion, independently of its intrinsic claims, require that it should thus be made a primary object. Who that compares the value of earthly gifts with that of the soul, can hesitate as to the degree of solicitude which ought to be bestowed on each? And who that reflects on the tenure of existence here, can think any period of its duration too early, to assure the safety of the immortal spirit?

Youth, doubtless, is the æra at which we ought to make our choice, and thus decide the complexion of our future years. This equally holds with women as with men. There is one consideration which peculiarly operates on the gentler sex: — their period of independence is often short, and therefore they should avail themselves of it, to decide for themselves on that question, which, of all others, the most concerns them. Religion, in their case, comes in very ill as an afterthought: they have, it is probable, at a later period, “to please their husbands,” as well as “to please the Lord;” and sad it is for the wife, awakened *singly* to a sense of spiritual obligations, to find her first social

duty interfering, perhaps, with a still higher claim, and an absence of sympathy, on the part of him, whom she loves the best, on the subject which most interests her.

On the contrary, how much care does a young woman spare herself, who, as soon as she is competent, chooses the good part. Her course is then marked out, her heart finds its asylum, she takes to herself a guide which in all difficulties opens to her a safe path, and strengthens her to follow it. In religion, her mind finds topics for reflection; her affections, objects worthy of their ardour; and all the impulses, which, in youth, are ready to expand, and lead her forth to action, discover an ample and a safe sphere in Christian exercises, and in the discharge of the evangelic precepts.

And as happiness depends not so much upon external circumstances as upon internal feelings, if we admit that the paramount influence, whatever it may be, affects not merely our character, but our estimate of good; we shall see that nothing can give so sure a promise of content as the fixing our desires upon objects which cannot disappoint them. Let us once know that,

beyond and above this world, and all its changes, there is that which can satiate our soul, — secured to us beyond the possibility of failure; — let us lay hold of this steadfast anchor, and we shall be prepared to encounter and endure all the disquietudes of life. We shall pass through the scenes that may await us with calm and hopeful tranquillity, shall see the light shining behind the darkest cloud, and be cheered in the valley of the shadow of death with the view of approaching glory.

CHAPTER III.

ON RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.

My little boy was asked, the other day, why he believed in such a doctrine? "Because mamma told me," was his reply. The answer, it must be confessed, was not satisfactory, but it was natural; and it stated probably the true grounds upon which a child's faith rests. Veneration is a prominent feature in the young mind; and until it is counteracted by the growth of other faculties, and the operation of external causes, it has the greatest share in determining the early character.

The influence of example upon children proves how actively veneration is in play even in the years of infancy. A child assimilates itself to those he sees; and therefore a child furnishes no unfair criterion of the character of the higher inmates of his household. And although the sentiment of veneration varies in

degree, according to innate disposition or the influence of other causes, yet it may be remarked that it operates the most strongly where education has been the most carefully attended to, and where the young pupils have been accustomed to obtain satisfaction by an appeal to those on whose judgment they naturally rely.

To speak of the responsibility thus incurred by first teachers is not the present intent; neither is it to analyze, or account for the existence of the principle to which allusion has been made, nor to say, to what degree, it ought to be encouraged. Those who are the instructors of childhood must often be grateful for the prevalence of the sentiment, as it operates in relation to themselves; for, however much they may desire to simplify truth, and to give a reason for what they propound as essential principles, they must feel that they are often constrained to draw largely on their own credit, as a pledge for their veracity; and must allow, that their personal authority has no inconsiderable share in guaranteeing the first lessons which they teach.

Implicit trust, however, is the habit natural

only to childhood. In the age which follows, a habit of inquiry usually springs up. Here, then, is the critical period of early life: here is the time when tenderness and judgment should guide the hand of the trainer; and when, on the bias given to the youthful shoot, the growth of the future plant depends.

Those who have remarked the workings of their own minds, or who have watched, with precision and care, the intellectual growth of others, will be disposed to admit that there is a moment when questions, as to those points which have hitherto been received on authority, first begin to suggest themselves; and when the mind assumes a posture of inquiry, the very reverse of that attitude of reliance, in which it has, till then, quietly reposed. It may be, that, from the imperfect sketch of a child's comprehension, we may sometimes not be sorry to avail ourselves of the disposition to believe us for our own sakes; still, however, we may wish that the credulity of our pupils was something less, that they would not so readily take us at our word, but would, themselves, ask for proofs level to their understandings, and



thus be better furnished with reasons, for what we wish them to believe. But, if the spirit of inquiry requires excitement and fostering in early childhood, it soon shoots forth in spontaneous and prurient growth, and, unless repressed or thwarted, it will not rest, until it has obtained satisfaction.

No doubt, this propensity to inquire is the first symptom of the developement of the reasoning faculties; it is the first indication that the mind gives of superior intelligence — the first extension of those intellectual feelers which grasp at knowledge infinite and eternal. We should assuredly rejoice in this promise of power, in this dawn of the higher capacities of the mind; and hail, as we do the first independent essays of infant pedestrianism, the earliest attempts of the youthful understanding to think and reason for itself.

There is no cause for believing that this disposition is peculiar only to the superior sex. The general course of female education is, indeed, not calculated to encourage any independent effort of the reasoning faculties: but though in woman, there is, and perhaps ought

to be, a natural propensity to rely on the guidance of others, yet, even in her, the passage from childhood to adolescence is marked by a desire to investigate what before has been taken for granted. On the treatment, then, of the mind during this process, depends much of its subsequent complexion; and, when we either neglect to notice its workings, or to render just that wise and timely aid which the delicacy of the case requires, we fail in what is by far the most important point of the discipline of the understanding; and that at the most critical juncture of its progress. For the spirit of inquiry may resolve itself into one of scepticism, and doubts be entertained which subsequent conviction can hardly overcome: or the mind may fall back upon prejudices, and, for want of a better resting-place, take refuge in the supposed infallibility of the doctrines it has been taught; or a trifling or indolent habit may be contracted that will check the search after truth; so that the wholesome desire for satisfaction may subside into an indifference to all serious subjects, and a distaste for every thing that requires thought.

And hence may result the imperfect notions which are sometimes rested in, upon the most important of all subjects. Religious inquiries frequently suggest themselves to the young mind :—they are entertained with anxiety ; and require to be answered with tenderness and judgment. But if such questions do not arise, or are discouraged or suppressed ;—if to the lessons of childhood nothing is added in the next stage of life ; if no more advanced instruction is then given on a subject, which of all others affords the deepest matter for reflection ; is it surprising that the opinions formed are inaccurate, and that the knowledge attained of even primary truths, is scanty and superficial ?

It has been already remarked that instruction on at least the elementary points of religious doctrine, is now regarded as an indispensable branch of education. But the indeterminate nature of the views entertained by some young persons, the incorrectness of their system, the incongruity and inconsistency of their creed, show that they are but imperfectly grounded in even the first principles of Christian faith ; and that they have given but little atten-

tion to a subject which they profess to consider as all-important. And thence arise dissatisfaction with themselves, repugnance to examine and thus detect the faults of their own theology, and a shrinking from an inquiry which demands an application of the mind to a speculative and spiritual subject, and might involve a conviction of previous error, and self-reproach for previous negligence.

Nor are the habits of young women always calculated to encourage the serious thought which religious inquiry calls for. The occupations and engagements of many tend rather to make study and application irksome; and therefore they are content to think that, beyond a few ordinary and obvious duties, they need give themselves little pains about their system of theology. With this impression, therefore, they are satisfied to be more ignorant of religion than of any thing else, and believing that it contains mysteries hard to be understood, to make no effort to unravel them.

And this, it is to be feared, is the case not only with the most frivolous and worldly. In families where a higher and better tone prevails,

the acquaintance with some of the most important and practical doctrines of religion is sometimes far from satisfactory. Young persons are not accurately grounded on spiritual subjects, so that when any point of religious faith becomes a question, the mind is not prepared to repel error, nor even to discriminate between it and truth.

To undervalue the consideration of the external evidences is perhaps the tendency of some well-meaning persons. Yet a neglect of these argues both a want of watchfulness against ordinary dangers, and of knowledge of the true principles of faith. The great preparatory point to establish in all religious instruction is, the infallibility of Scripture. Let the mind once be brought implicitly to credit the Bible, as the word of God, and it can do no other than receive the doctrines that are contained in it. Unbelief in the Christian system ordinarily arises from not considering the appeal to Scripture as conclusive, from hesitating to recognise its claim to inspiration, and consequently disallowing its paramount authority. And therefore the arguments which bring to the authen-

ticity and genuineness of the sacred writings a testimony equal, at least, to what can be adduced in favour of any standard work of antiquity, should be laid before young persons, and be made familiar to their minds. How else can they satisfy the inquiries which are so likely to arise in their own hearts? How else are they prepared to repel the attacks from without, to which, an ordinary intercourse with society, or even, acquaintance with literature (to our shame it must be confessed) renders them liable? What safeguard can they otherwise oppose to insinuations of the sceptic, to the practical unbelief that pervades the world? When we place in the hands of our daughters the fascinating pages of the historian of their own country, is it enough that we denounce his infidel opinions, if we furnish them with no means wherewith to counteract them,—no shield to blunt the edge of his sarcasm, and to guard against his ungodly sneer? It would seem as if we calculated upon a natural propensity to faith rather than to unbelief; as if we imagined that prescription was the best safeguard to principle, and that it was enough to represent infidelity as

criminal, without proving that it is also irrational and unwise.

The evidence that is brought to bear upon the authority of Scripture is so harmonious and complete that it cannot be traced even through its most simple and obvious links without admiration. It furnishes a delightful subject of research, and one which, from its bringing into easy play the reasoning powers, is eminently calculated to improve the mind. From the examination of the general argument which, grounded on rules by which all evidence is attested, concludes so triumphantly for the truth of Revelation, and leaves the candid inquirer without the shadow of a doubt ; to the tracing of the minute coincidences which stamp, as with an autograph, every portion of the sacred writings, and render one book corroborative of another, there is no investigation, which, in relation either to its end, or to the steps by which it is conducted, is equally important, and equally satisfactory. The examination, for instance, of the argument of the *Horæ Paulinæ*, or the making fresh applications of the same principle,

and discovering by its means new examples of the accuracy of the sacred authors, is a study so satisfactory that it needs not the eloquence of Paley to recommend it. And though the young female inquirer may shrink from more laborious researches; though she may find Butler hard to be understood, and be unable to master all the arguments which Christian learning can adduce in support of Christian truth; yet she should be encouraged to lay deep the foundation of her faith, both that she may fully satisfy her own mind, and that she may be enabled, whenever called on, to give a reason for the hope that is in her.

The faith of the understanding is intimately connected with that of the heart; and whatever tends to strengthen the one, is calculated, by divine grace, to infuse life into the other. And nothing is more satisfactory to the Christian disciple than to be able to put down, by a reference to arguments which have for ever set at rest the question, the sceptical doubts which the Tempter, at every stage of spiritual progress, takes occasion to suggest.

There is, besides, a collateral benefit to be

derived from studying the evidences of Christianity, of which some of the religious errors of the present day have taught us the importance. By acquainting ourselves with the grounds on which God asks for our belief in his own interposition, we learn to discriminate between what are certain, and what are questionable, proofs of a divine interference; and the same principles which warrant our faith in the *true* revelation render us suspicious of all pretensions which cannot stand an equal scrutiny. It is a striking proof, both of the mercy and wisdom of God, that, in a matter so important as that of a communication from himself, he appeals to a criterion which cannot be mistaken, and submits the tokens by which he authenticates his message to no less an evidence than that of our senses. They, indeed, are the legitimate judges of miracles; for they, when in combined and healthful action, are not capable of mistake; and, therefore, to them were the signs which attested Christianity addressed. Visions and revelations, however sublime and ecstatic, are not the evidences upon which our faith is demanded: the heavenly manifestations of Patmos, or of the mount of

Transfiguration, afforded, no doubt, to those who were their privileged spectators, a certain assurance of the reality of the glories *they* had seen; but the signs, which to us authenticate the finger of God, are even more infallible than a merely spiritual and exclusive revelation, and are open to the scrutiny of those that believe not, as well as of those that believe.

The better, therefore, that we are instructed in the evidences upon which Christianity rests, the more cautious shall we be in admitting new claims to a supernatural interference, or in crediting assumptions which are not guaranteed by the same character and degree of proof. It is probable that the fanatical errors of the present day would scarcely have found so many votaries, especially amongst the gentler sex, had young women been better instructed in the grounds of their professed belief,—had they proved the foundation of truth,—had they, in short, received the creed they acknowledge, not as a matter of routine, or of tuition, but of knowledge and conviction. There is no better safeguard against credulity than a sound and well-instructed faith. The mind really imbued with

an assurance of the authority of the one true revelation from Heaven, is jealous of all false pretensions to equal honour ; and, accustomed to scrutinise before it yields its confidence, regards the being asked to credit what is advanced upon questionable testimony almost as an affront. It has not taken imagination or mere feeling for an adequate guide in matters of faith ; it has sought higher ground,—has required and received satisfactory and even tangible proof ; and the very strength of the faith it has thus imbibed, renders it the more cautious and discriminating as to the grounds on which it always renders its belief.

There is, indeed, another testimony—to believers more convincing. Their faith receives its seal from their daily experience of the suitability of Christianity to their wants, from their knowledge of its results ; and, above all, from the witness they possess within themselves—the impression wrought upon their own hearts of its truth, and of a personal interest in its promises. But this secret assurance, precious as it is to those who possess it, is not that on which faith is *primarily* founded ; neither is it that on

which *alone* faith, at any time, rests; neither is it that on which an appeal is chiefly made to such as are still unbelieving and in doubt. Valuable as it is, it is as the talisman—esteemed only by those who know its charm—that is kept concealed in the bosom; whereas the external proofs, arranged in lucid order, are as a string of gems, open to the eye of all, the beauty and brilliancy of which all may admire, and of the faultlessness of which all are invited to judge.

It must, then, surely be admitted, that the evidences of Christianity are a study not to be neglected, but, on the contrary, one that is especially important to young women in the early developement of their minds. Instead of being put off from inquiries, which may at that time suggest themselves, as to the grounds of their faith, they should rather be encouraged in them; encouraged to examine and understand, both for their present satisfaction and their future shield, in order to strengthen their belief and guard them against error. Faith, as the Christian knows, is the exclusive work and gift of the Holy Spirit: still it is to evidences that the Spirit appeals; it is by the relation of signs

and wonders, as it once was by the signs and wonders themselves, that the Spirit brings conviction to the heart; and on these, together with the internal testimony, she grounds the divine authenticity of the revelation. And when faith is thus established; when it is a matter of conviction, the result of scrutiny, and sealed by an individual appropriation of its privileges, it is indeed a fortress to which the enemy has not access, equally proof against the open assaults of scepticism, and the subtle underminings of heresy.

The great object in view, in thus informing the mind is, as we have observed, the establishment of the authority of Scripture. All religious error must arise from either a want of deference to the Bible, or an ignorance or misinterpretation of it. The first of these causes is, perhaps, the most prolific of false opinions; and it often involves the other two. For, where there is a want of reverence for the authority of Scripture, the natural results are indifference to its contents, and an accommodation of these to our own fancy. Whereas, when the Bible is regarded as the oracle of God, its enunciations are sought out with the deepest interest, and are

received in their plain, unvarnished meaning, as the infallible revelation of his will.

To a want, then, of this deep reverence for Scripture—to this practical unbelief—may be ascribed the ignorance which we meet with on the subject of religion, and the error which is its offspring. In spite of the generally increasing interest on religious subjects, and the excitement which sometimes prevails, it is yet to be feared that a sound knowledge of the doctrinal truths of Christianity is by no means common. With regard, for instance, to the great key-stone of the Christian system, the doctrine of the Triune existence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, — involving the distinct personality and offices of the Eternal Three—though so strongly accredited in the formularies of the Church to which most of us belong; though imbibed, one would think, with our mother's milk; are there not many, who are regarded as even well instructed in religion, who know little of it except its name,—who are aware neither of the truths it implies, nor of the grounds on which it rests? They regard it as a dry dogma, which they are bound, indeed, to confess, but of which they have

are often virtually acted on; and an indifference to the mysteries of Christianity, an approbation of such religious works or teachers as give them no pre-eminence, shows that the essence of the Gospel has been lost, and that the leaven of Socinianism has already begun to work, and is exercising its baleful influence on the mind.

Religion may thus be reduced to a mere name. And of those, whose principles are thus vague and undeterminate, it may, with truth, be said, that they neither believe what they profess, nor know what they believe; but are ready to entertain every teacher who addresses them with eloquence, and in plausible and smooth phraseology. They are, therefore, without much difficulty, persuaded to give up truths which they never rightly valued, and to become the disciples of a school, whose system it is to discard every unpalatable tenet and every mysterious doctrine.

These remarks apply, in their full extent at least, only to persons who are careless of religion, or who do not regard it as a matter of paramount interest. But if, even amongst religious persons, there is, as has been remarked, sometimes a

deficiency in the course of female education, in laying the foundation of faith, should we not the more carefully examine our own practice in the exposition of elementary principles, and ask ourselves whether we have placed these before our young pupils as a subject of personal and individual inquiry?

If we look at the result, — if we consider the state of religious knowledge prevalent amongst many women, — we shall find the more cause to make this inquiry. For we shall mistrust, in some cases, their ability to give an account of their own creed, or to detect heresy; their acquaintance with the grounds on which the doctrines of the Gospel rest; and their power, from want of exercise, even to understand and follow the apostolic arguments which establish them.

It may, indeed, justly be suspected that, if the importance of an accurate knowledge of Christian truth had been adequately felt, the errors which have recently seduced some of the young and tender members of the flock would scarcely have found so ready an entrance. Had the doctrine of salvation been rightly understood, and the imputation of the guilt of Adam and of the righte-

ousness of Christ been *scripturally* explained, as by comparing John, iii. 36., with Romans, v. 19, &c., the semi-pelagian tenet of universal pardon, of which of late we have heard so much, would at once have been rejected as an opinion incongruous with the Christian system, and involving dangerous and heretical consequences. And again,—had the certainty of the divine counsels been established as an essential principle of Deity, and been considered, especially in application to the fulfilment of the purpose which, in reference to the human race, may be said (with reverence) to have taken the lead in the Eternal mind,—the tenet of the fallibility, still more of the sinful humanity, of the Son of God, and the consequent possibility of failure in the great plan of Omnipotence,—far from being listened to as a proposition worthy of entertainment,—would at once have been rejected as a blasphemous speculation, that impugned the very essence and attributes of God. Let it not be said that these subjects are too deep for our young female pupils; that they involve abstruse and metaphysical inquiries; and that it is not for us to perplex the mind, in its tender state,

with questions requiring the highest powers of reason to understand and solve. It is not to invite to theologic disputation,—but to ward off from it,—that we would endeavour, in early life, to lay the groundwork of Christian faith,—that we would, without evasion or dilution of any scriptural doctrine, expound the great mystery of godliness,—that we would build, stone by stone, the perfectly compacted edifice, and show that, from the great Base on which it rests, to its polished capitals, there is not one single block that will bear displacing, one particle, the absence of which would not impair the unity and beauty of the entire temple.

Nothing is better calculated to divert from impertinent and unprofitable speculations than leading the mind to the study of what is really essential. It may be sometimes a fault in young persons, who are interested in religious subjects, to bestow their attention on inquiries which tend to but little practical improvement, and rather engender party feeling and exclusiveness. Some, whose theological knowledge is superficial, who, even in such articles as that of justification, or the origin and accomplishment of individual

salvation, have much to learn, are yet more prone to diverge into extraneous questions, than to labour to attain a solid and scriptural acquaintance with primary doctrines. They are more eager, perhaps, to speculate on the events of the future personal Advent of Messiah, to conjecture its epoch, duration, and details, than to be instructed in the revelation he has already made; and they listen with more anxious anxiety to a vision, or prophecy of apocryphal authority, and doubtful import, than to a plain and practical exposition of a saving truth.

With a view, then, to divert from such curiosity, and to satisfy the mind upon what is most essential, the importance of an early and complete system of religious instruction upon all the vital mysteries of faith will be admitted. The appetite for strange views chiefly arises from the ignorance of those real treasures which have something better than novelty to recommend them, and of which nothing but an intimate knowledge can teach us the full value. Let the young female inquirer, who is disposed to listen to all that pretends to originality, apply to the experienced Christian; let

her ask of one who, with prayer and humility, has sought the pure fountain of the Divine Word, whether there is not in the old ways and paths enough to interest and satisfy the soul that thirsts only for vital truth, — whether each day's study of doctrines, which have ever been received as the essentials of Christian verity, does not bring to light more of their perfection; does not confirm their applicability to individual want; does not disclose so rich and inexhaustible a vein of spiritual treasure, that, to those who have dug into it, the glitter of ephemeral theories and novel opinions offers no allurements.

To the attainment of religious knowledge the means are simple, and easy of access. The mistake often lies in neglecting these, and substituting others more difficult. A young inquirer is perplexed by the multitude of treatises she is recommended to consult; and, studying these rather than Scripture, — or, at least, relying on them for an explanation of Scripture, — she not unfrequently loses sight of the truth she is pursuing. Perhaps no opinions are so likely to be correct as those which are received on the



first calm, serious, and unbiassed reading of the Bible. We might almost say, that the less that is *then* known of human commentary the better. Let the *first* impression be received from immediate contact with the Inspired Word; and the youthful student be encouraged to seek in the Bible itself, an explanation of its own difficulties, and to divest herself of opinions which have not been derived from the same infallible source. Not that a disposition to disparage wholesome guides should be admitted. If it is an error to rely too much on human helps, it is an equal one to depreciate them. Sometimes a profession of looking simply to the Bible is only a cloak for setting authority aside, and exclusively adhering to our own opinions. Such a spirit is the reverse of the teachable temper which really looks for, and finds, improvement in the perusal of the Scriptures. Whilst we do not burden ourselves with cumbersome aids,—whilst we are especially careful to seek our assistance only from the pious and the wise,—we should still endeavour to benefit by the labours of such as have explored and elucidated the sacred field.

But those who promise the most largely are not always the safest teachers. The attempts to systematise Christianity, and to solve its paradoxes, have not unfrequently confused rather than simplified; and shifted the knot instead of unloosing it. And, indeed, it is only reasonable that we should be somewhat suspicious of schemes which profess to remove all difficulties, and to render quite easy what has hitherto been deemed mysterious.

The spirit of truth, from the beginning, has rested with the believing Church; and though Christians may differ as to the precise division of their body, where it has been the least vexed by error and opposed by corruption, they doubt not that it has ever fulfilled its office to enlighten and to guide the saints of God. Can we, then, give credit to hypotheses which presuppose a want of knowledge in *all* who have gone before, and assert, that to a few instructors of this late century has been vouchsafed the first and only ray of pure illumination? Can we thus join in this sweeping censure of preceding ages, and magnify some gifted modern teachers at the expense of

those who have been venerated as lights in the Church?

The Protestant, at the period of the Reformation, in spite of the darkness with which the external Church was enveloped, could discern the lamp of truth burning in the inner sanctuary, and trace amongst the faithful remnant the line of scriptural doctrine which he was taunted with as being new. But it is not so with recent innovators. Their merit lies in proposing tenets which have no precedent, and in striking out interpretations which no previous commentator has suggested. Or, if to some of their extreme opinions antiquity furnishes any prototype, it may be found in some exploded heresy, of which the name and phases are alike forgotten.

An early acquaintance with Scripture tends to produce humility and caution. It is not those who best know the Inspired Volume who think least of its difficulties; but those who take a partial survey, and build their theology on a few isolated texts. On this account, the study of the Bible itself should especially be urged upon the young of our own sex. We know that the faults imputed to women are a cre-

dulous ear, temerity in judgment, and a confidence too inconsiderate and implicit. They should, therefore, be prepared to exercise discrimination by an intimate acquaintance with the fountain of truth. They should know the Bible thoroughly and wholly, — not in compilations or extracts merely : — they should take it as their text book, — by which they are to try their creed, — and from the decision of which they are to admit of no appeal.

It is of importance, also, to establish the consistency of Scripture with itself. For this reason, it should be read consecutively and comparatively, and each part considered in its bearing to the whole. One epistle must not be kept back, because it may seem abstruse ; nor undue prominence be given to another portion of Scripture, because it may accord with our own peculiar view. The seal is set to the completeness of the volume of inspiration in the concluding verses of the last book ; and the agreement and adjustment of its parts are essential to its perfection and harmony. Let it be our care not to disturb its balance, nor to dilute nor exaggerate any of its statements.

The daily reading of the Scriptures is, of course, observed in all religious families. Frequently it is thought a necessary part of school-room routine, even where vital Christianity is little understood; and blessed effects may result from the habit, though it may have been only formally observed. The young people of a household may have drawn, from lessons thus prescribed, instruction which may have awakened them to the deficiencies of their own conduct, and the inconsistencies of their own creed.

Those, however, who have more than the form of godliness, and who are therefore in earnest in the religious instruction of their children, will be anxious to make their sacred studies not merely a matter of business, but interesting and delightful.

They will, therefore, second the first propensity for serious inquiry, and satisfy the first longing for divine knowledge by an affectionate unfolding of scriptural truth, — establishing, in the first place, the authority of the Bible, and then deducing, from it alone, the system of Christian doctrine and conduct.

And such mothers as are capable of thus guid-

ing and enlightening their children will assuredly take this branch of instruction under their special care. They may commit other subjects of tuition to governesses and teachers; they may want leisure or even ability to conduct these to their satisfaction; but they will reserve to themselves, to their own judgment and tenderness, the hallowed office of unfolding the Bible to their children. At least, whatever assistance they may receive from others in this the most important science, they will themselves be the chief instructors. It is to them that their little ones will bring their Bibles; to them, that they will put the questions which, on these subjects, occur to their young minds; from them, that they will be fed with the sincere milk of the Word, and will imbibe that taste for scriptural instruction which, with the blessing of God, may lead to the real knowledge of divine truth.

Religious knowledge, we must remember, differs in this respect from every other,—that an influence independent of our own efforts is indispensable to its attainment. The inspiration which dictated the truths of Scripture must dis-

cover and apply them individually, to render us capable of understanding and receiving them. But where the seed is sown, the dew from heaven will not be wanting. Even though it may lie dormant for a time, it will revive and fructify; and the sheaves shall return into the maternal bosom, and yield a golden harvest to her who first sowed in faith. The prayers of a Christian mother are laid up in censers before the throne of the Eternal, and, as a perpetual and grateful incense, are accepted by Him to whom parental affection is no strange sentiment. He will not withhold the blessing: and the young woman who, in childhood, was taught by her earliest instructors to love her Bible, and, in adolescence, was encouraged to seek in its sacred pages a satisfaction to her spirit and a solution of her doubts, will, it may be confidently hoped, receive in its perusal that illumination which will enlighten its mysteries, and apply its life-giving doctrines to her eternal salvation. She will become a partaker of the heavenly gift—the earnest of fuller manifestations, and the dawn and promise of perfect day.

And if, in the present aspect of the Christian

world, we see much to apprehend as well as to hope; if, while, on the one hand, we hail the increase of Gospel light, on the other we lament the growth of heresy; if, although in some cases the form of godliness has yielded to its power, in others the semblance even has disappeared, and unbelief is unblushingly professed; if, in short, there is every where a conflict between error and truth, and the struggle seems hastening to its crisis, is not this the time to arm our children with the sword of the Spirit, and to prepare them by lessons of heavenly wisdom for the conflict they may encounter?

We may remember, too, that as women are by no means exempt from the danger, so they are not from the obligation to guard against it. The weaker sex are, indeed, peculiarly liable to attack. They are regarded as tempting subjects by all who are eager for proselytes. The propounder of novelties counts on their susceptibility; the mystic on their enthusiasm; the infidel on their lack of knowledge; and all on their propensity to change. Is it not, then, our duty to place on them a double guard, and thus to disappoint those who calculate on their weakness?

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTIANITY — DOCTRINAL.

THE belief that religion involves mysteries, — lying sometimes under the type of outward symbol, — the discerning of which belongs to the enlightened worshipper, has been almost universally entertained. There is a general impression that, beyond the reach of human knowledge, are secrets which, when revealed, would explain phenomena for which we can render no account, and would satisfy our minds on points of momentous and perplexing interest.

This conviction is strengthened by habits of reflection. It is when we exercise *thought*, that we find ourselves, on every subject, stopped by mystery. Those who are heedless, unob-servant passengers, who take no note of things but as they subserve their own use, may occupy a place in a world of wonders, unconscious of

marvels with which they are familiar, and unsolicitous for their explanation. And this is the case with too many who are travellers on the journey of life.

But if we are of a different cast, if we stop to think on what passes before or within us, we shall find ourselves every where met by what is to us inexplicable. Objects of sense have their mystery. The recondite secrets of nature exercise and perplex the curious inquirer; and every attempt to unravel them is arrested at a point where human speculation fails.

But much more unfathomable is the mystery which invests all that has reference to our spiritual condition. There is not a point in our moral constitution, an act of our will, a faculty of our mind, that does not involve questions which we cannot solve, and point at secrets which are hid in the Divine counsels. And if we look at the mazes in which human reason has been bewildered, at the conflicting sentiments of those who, unassisted by superior guidance, have endeavoured to discover truth, we shall be confirmed in the impression, both that spiritual

knowledge must contain principles beyond the limit of our understanding, and that, without an express revelation, we could not even have ascertained their existence.

Every reflecting mind will expect to find in religion mysteries more transcendent than in any other science. Such a mind will even doubt the authenticity of any system, purporting to originate in Divine wisdom, that does not contain such mysteries. For if, in the prosecution of every inquiry, we are accustomed to turn back at a certain point, with the confession — here we know no more; beyond this we can render no account; this is the mystery of life — of vegetation — of magnetism or, again, to go a step higher, — this is instinct — or nerve — or muscular irritability; — if, in these ordinary subjects, we so soon get beyond our depth, and must have recourse to terms which express little more than our ignorance of the powers which they denote, must we not, in the highest science, — in a science relating to things invisible — to Him of whom we have no adequate conceptions, — conclude that its truths are the secrets of the

mind of God ; and that, as such, they infinitely pass our knowledge, and can only, in any degree, be revealed by the express manifestation of the Divine Spirit ?

Under these impressions, we shall not be disposed to adopt any theological system, of which the apparent object is, to despoil religion of its mysterious articles of creed. We shall not be disposed to reduce faith to an historical belief in a specific fact, nor to think that a preceptive code comprises the whole of religious ethics. We shall not entertain opinions merely because they accommodate themselves to our apprehensions ; and, by evading difficulties, appear to overcome them. But we shall be prepared to meet with much that is mysterious and paradoxical — *beyond* reason, though not contrary to it — in any authentic manifestation of Divine truth. If in earthly things there is so much that is unsearchable, what must we not expect when we hear of heavenly things ?

Religion is the mystery of mysteries. It furnishes a solution of many subordinate difficulties ; and, by its sublime truths, much that is otherwise dark and perplexing may be accounted

for, though not explained. The pious naturalist—unable, as he is, to reduce to elemental particles many of those compounds whose properties are known to him, or to tell the nature of those subtle powers on whose operations he can calculate with mathematical precision—finds, in the belief of Deity, in the reference of the manifold processes of nature to His creating and sustaining hand, a satisfactory apology to his own mind for all that surpasses his intelligence. He feels as those who are ignorant of machinery do in looking at a complex engine. They observe its motion,—they admire its capability,—they calculate on its exactness,—they trust to its operation. Though they can give no explanation of its internal processes, they can satisfactorily account for their result: they are the work of a master hand.

This is, of course, the solution of all natural mysteries. When our finite understanding can trace no further the links in the chain, we pass to the First Great Cause. There is the intelligence that sees what to us is obscure,—that creates and combines the individual particles,

and originates the laws of their motion and affinity. There are agencies which we cannot see, — springs too subtle for us even to comprehend; but, even though we cannot follow their workings, we possess the clue which leads us to their Author.

The same reasoning applies to spiritual science. Religion, the revelation from God, is the only guide to the intricacies of moral phenomena. It accounts for these, not by removing their difficulties, but by resolving them into its own transcendent truths. We can no more expect that the manifestation of God, in his character and government, as relates to our spiritual being, should explain the perplexities of our moral constitution, than that the knowledge of him as Creator and Sustainer of the natural world should unfold all the processes of the material universe. Our reason is as little capable of judging of the one, as understanding is of discerning the other. In both we admire the results; and from these we learn the perfection of their author. And in so far as we can comprehend the counsels of God, or trace the operations of his hand, we see revealed his wisdom

and his goodness ; but, when his ways are unsearchable, the darkness rests with us. Our organ cannot reach the heaven of heavens, nor read the Divine mind.

We are justified, therefore, in the belief that theology, as revealed, must contain much that is mysterious. We must expect, also, that it will *not* solve many of the perplexities of our moral nature, otherwise than by a reference to the Divine will. And we shall, therefore, be prepared to submit our reason to an authenticated manifestation of God's procedure, and to regard what is transcendent in such a manifestation, not as an invalidation of it, but an internal corroboration of its truth.

It is with these impressions that we should prosecute an inquiry, the most momentous of any that can occupy the mind. It is in this spirit — the spirit of self-distrust, and of submission to Divine teaching — that, having been convinced of the authority of the word of God, we should seek in it the knowledge that is above all price. And then we shall not start back when we find that God, as revealed in Scripture, is not the God of our imagination ; and that

his dealings have no exemplar in the transactions of men.

Such a frame of mind is an essential preparation to the study of Divine truth, and disposes us to take refuge at once in the only safe asylum,—namely, the revelation which God has made. And it should be our careful endeavour to lead the young mind thus to acquiesce in Divine mysteries, and to seek its rest in the assured message from on high.

It has already been remarked, that a spirit of inquiry characterises youth. We may also observe that, in many cases, the same period is marked by solicitude with reference to personal religion. It would seem as if this were often the time of the first effusion of the Spirit upon the heart. And, doubtless, as, in the Divine economy, outward circumstances are often made subservient to individual conversions by the frame of mind which they induce, it may be expected that, amongst the seasons propitious to the reception of the heaven-born principle, the period of the dawn of reason and of the development of the affections, should be one of the most favourable. If, in childhood, the good

seed has been sown and has taken root, in adolescence the plant puts forth the shoots which indicate its character. And where no such care has been bestowed, there is still a softening of the heart, a glow of tenderness, and, in minds of a reflective cast, a disposition to serious thought, which often originate a solicitude on subjects of a spiritual nature.

In such cases the first anxiety that presses upon the mind arises from the sight of evil, and the sense of sin. The first induces perplexity ; the second apprehension. Suppose the heart, were it possible, free from taint,—rather suppose it unawakened to the consciousness of guilt,—admiring virtue in its loveliness, and unsullied by actual crime. This is what the world calls the innocence of youth. Without adverting to the impropriety of the term, consider the effect produced on such a mind by the mere sight of evil. Let a young woman, thus unsophisticated, thus pure, be led to reflect on the sin every where around her,—on the dark page which history unfolds,—on the wickedness with which she is herself often brought in contact,—on the cruelty connected even with the supply of daily

want, — must she not ask, from whence is the mischief? In a world so fair, that it speaks its Divine original, how comes the blemish? The infant form of beauty, smiling in its radiant joy and love, seems the bright promise of a perfect being ;—why is maturity so degenerate? Why—for the inquiry must proceed so far—is evil so connected with present enjoyment, that the worst crimes are only the consequence, if we trace the gradation, of an indulgence in earthly pleasure?

The mind, thus reasoning, becomes absorbed in sad and painful doubt. But the doubt assumes a more personal interest, when the inquiry turns inward, and conscience intimates that whilst there is so much evil without, all is not right within. In spite of the flattering voice of human commendation, — the soothing unction of self-esteem,—there is a secret misgiving, a suspicion that the root of bitterness, prolific in so much evil, has its place in the heart, and has already germinated in a soil congenial to its growth.

There are, in short, a consciousness of sin, and an apprehension grounded upon it,—an apprehension vague and undefined at first,—but

which, if not lulled by the opiate of flattery, resolves itself into a fear of the Divine Being, — of whom our first conception is — that he is the perfection of holiness.

Before the mind resorts to Scripture, the law of conscience written on the heart becomes a condemning letter. The first conviction of sin may arise, not from the conscious transgression of a revealed precept, but from the feeling that the heart has swerved from the line of rectitude engraven on its fleshly tablets. For besides these immutable laws of right and wrong, — which, bound up in our very being, are the traces of the original godlike image impressed on the primæval pair, — there is a partial enlightenment of conscience, produced by the popular reception of gospel truth and recognition of Christian ethics.

It is this internal standard, imperfect though it be, which often acts as an elementary school-master. It is a reproof witness; and its testimony creates dissatisfaction, doubt, and fear.

Thus, on the very threshold of spiritual inquiry, we are taught to desire revealed truth. We find ourselves lost in a labyrinth, and catch

at the clue which is to guide us out of it. We are stumbling on the dark mountains ; but the clouds that envelope us, hasten our steps towards the star of hope that glimmers in the distance. The sight of evil, for which we cannot account,—the sense of sin, for which we cannot atone,—lead the reflecting mind seriously to search the record in which is contained the counsel of God, and to seek the illumination which is to disclose its saving doctrines. And the heart that is really called by God will safely reach its home. It will come, broken it may be, to the fountain of truth, and will recover soundness from its healing waters.

The doctrines of Christianity are all sanative. They are, therefore, not sought out till they are felt to be needful ; nor are they applied in their full efficacy, until the urgency of the case is ascertained. Thus a sense of sin prepares for the reception of the saving mystery of the Gospel,—that all important article of the Christian creed, on which every other of its truths is based.

A full acceptance of the Doctrine of Atonement is essential to peace and Christian holiness.

Professedly every member of an orthodox church believes it. But it is not until its suitability to individual need is felt, that it is understood and welcomed. It is then that the discovery of God made flesh, is as a light shining in a dark place; and that the rising of this sun of righteousness is hailed as the harbinger of health and joy.

The Scripture accounts for the prevalence of evil. It reveals the cause and the nature of the curse which darkens creation, and of the sinful principle which stirs within the heart. It propounds, as an article of faith, what experience is slow to learn,—the corruption of our nature,—the servitude even of the will. In one sense, indeed, the will is, and must be, free. It is always free to choose.—But the bias that influences the will is, by nature, to evil, not to good. Therefore the will, until its true liberty is restored, prefers evil, and incurs the guilt of its selection.

Thus the internal propensity to sin is transmitted together with the judicial guilt. The perverse nature of the first Adam is inherited, as also his sin is imputed. And though this

transmission of guilt is mysterious : is the transmission of the penalty less so ? Yet of this the death of every unconscious infant speaks the proof to our hearts. Nor have we a less convincing or less affecting evidence of our inheritance of sin. Whence the alienation of the heart from God ? Whence our dislike to spiritual service,—our absorption in earthly pursuits,—our longing, even in childhood, after forbidden pleasures. “ I cannot pray but I sin ; nay, I cannot hear a sermon but I sin ; I cannot give an alms or receive the sacrament but I sin ; nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them : my repentance needs to be repented of, my tears want washing, and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again in the blood of my Redeemer. Thus not only the worst of my sins, but even the best of my duties, speak me a child of Adam ; insomuch that whensoever I reflect upon my past actions, methinks I cannot but look upon my whole life to be but as one continued act of sin.”*

* Beveridge's Private Thoughts, Article IV.

For a disease, so inveterate, Omnipotence only can provide a cure; and it is the conviction of this that prepares us for the stupendous intervention of the Son of God.

The application of the remedy is equivalent and analogous to the transmission of the disease. The sin of the first Adam is even more than counterpoised by the righteousness of the second. In the transactions of both representatives, there is a double process;—a transfer of sin from the guilty to the innocent; and of righteousness, from Him who alone is righteous, to the inheritors of guilt, and the actual transgressors of God's law. The more we contemplate this mystery, the more do we admire its stupendous grace. The satisfaction is sufficient: the righteousness perfect. Nothing less could save from the penalty, or entitle to the reward. We are like penniless bankrupts, to whom, when the old score is wiped off, there is no means of avoiding a new debt. But he who has undertaken for us, has not only cancelled the first claim, but has given us wherewithal to be, in future, solvent.

Into this mystery it is no wonder that angels

should desire to look. And if they are the admiring spectators, how much more should we be? If, of the countless worlds which people space, God, in His sovereignty, has chosen this as the theatre for the exhibition of His highest love, is it not specially for us to adore His distinguishing mercy. Redemption has raised us in the scale of creatures. We hear that the universe teems with spheres unknown,—that the luminous path that girds the heavens is but a cluster of suns giving light, it may be, to individual systems;—that, were our world erased, its void would scarcely be perceived in the material immensity:—and, who that reflects on this, but must feel his nothingness,—must think that he is little more to be accounted of than the ephemeral insect; that he is an atom,—a speck,—and that all his concerns and interests are as the mote that plays in the sunbeam, or the dust that lights upon the balance. Yet it is not so. Deity has stooped to assume our form, and has been clothed with our suffering humanity. And why?—Because the immortal soul is above all price; because this ethereal spark—this emanation from the Divine Essence is worth more

than myriads of material worlds,—or than the most perfect and majestic forms of animal existence.

It needs but the omnific word of Deity, and the empyrium is spangled with countless gems:—suns and planets know their place, and walk in the bounds that they dare not pass. “He made the stars also.” But it cost more to redeem our souls. It cost more—and God is more glorified by his second work. It was a higher strain which the Bethlehem shepherds heard, than when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God chanted in our natal day. What wonder that angels should sympathise * in each new fruit of this last glorious enterprise, and repeat their triumphant song, when every captive spirit finds release. And how rapturous will be their chorus, when they welcome in the world’s regeneration, when the band of the chosen is complete, and with their ransomed brethren, they adore the consummated work of the incarnate God.

Atonement, once received, the Christian sys-

* Luke, xv. 10.

tem opens, line by line. The Word of God contains the lesson, and His spirit is the preacher. The end of redemption is to annul the power of evil. The claim against us is cancelled, that the dominion of sin within us may be destroyed. The guilt is expiated, that the soul, at peace with God, may regain its paternal likeness.

This is the work of the Divine Spirit: it is by His operation that the will is again made free. In its primæval state, the movements of the will were in accordance with those of the heaven-born spirit—they were the expression of the soul's breathings after perfect good. The desire, the will, the inclination, the action were all good. God looked on the work, and it was very good. Such was the law of liberty, in which our first parents walked blameless, obeying the motions of their own hearts, for the image of God was there,—and following their own will, for that will was identical with the will of God.

To this perfect law of liberty the children of God will be restored. In it they are even now initiated by the spirit of adoption. And it is this initiation that constitutes the renewal of their minds—a work begun when the first bias

heavenward is given to the soul, and carried on in its progressive sanctification.

The indwelling of the Spirit in the heart is the evidence of a participation in the Saviour's merits. Those who are reconciled to God, are partakers of his best gifts. They are his children, born again in the laver of regeneration. Their affections are towards him; for he has infused in them the spirit of his love, which is as a germ of holiness leading them to Himself, warring against the corrupt principle within, and withstanding the seductions of evil from without.

The consciousness of such a sentiment, the belief that the soul is really athirst for God, whilst it encourages a humble and rejoicing hope, leads to the ascription of glory to Him to whom alone it is due. The inquiry suggests itself,—From whence is the principle that stirs within me;—the impulse that draws my soul to God? From whence are those desires after holiness which have arisen within my breast? They are not self-existent; they cannot be of spontaneous growth.

The aspirations of the renewed heart, do

indeed, themselves indicate their original. They refer to their source. They come from God, and point to God. There is a consciousness within the breast of every child of heaven, that the spiritual breath he breathes is the gift of God. Did the Scripture not ascribe it to the fountain of eternal love, it would itself attest its source. I have nothing that I have not received, is the believer's witness. I could not have quickened my own soul. I could not have chosen Christ, if Christ had not first chosen me. I could not have come to Christ, if the Father had not drawn me. I could not have arisen from the valley of death, if the spirit had not breathed upon me; if the word of God had not said unto me,—Live; if the prescient mind of the Eternal Three had not, in their everlasting counsel, designed my salvation, and enrolled my name in the Book of Life. The individual purpose of mercy, hid in the secrets of the Divine breast, is read in the actual work of the Spirit on the heart. The return of the soul to God speaks its election to eternal life.

But it is not on special, but on general declarations of God's will and promises, that

Christians must rest. They trace back, indeed, to the rock from which they are hewn: they know that the stream which refreshes their souls must have had its rise in the everlasting hills;—but it is only as they find within them this holy well, and feel it to be effectual to the purifying of their souls, that they ascertain its identity with the river of life, which issues from the throne of God. “The doctrine of Election,” says the Christian philosopher of our own day, “is in itself a necessary inference from an undeniable fact—necessary, at least, for all who hold that the best of men are what they are, through the grace of God. In relation to the believer it is a hope, which, if it spring out of Christian principles, be examined by the tests, and nourished by the means prescribed in Scripture, will become a lively, an assured hope, but which cannot in this life pass into knowledge, much less, certainty of foreknowledge.”*

The life of the Christian can only be maintained from the same source whence it was first derived. As it did not generate itself, so

* Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*. Comment on aphorism second, on spiritual religion.

neither can it support itself. This, too, is confirmed by the internal witness. For, though we are told in the outset of our pilgrimage, that we must seek for a daily renewal of the spiritual gift: though it is analogous with the Divine procedure that we should continue dependent,—so that salvation, both in itself and in the means that lead to it, might be wholly gratuitous,—yet the conviction that it must be so is scarcely established but by actual experience. We must learn our insufficiency by our own failures.

In virtue, then, of our union with our spiritual head, the principle of vitality is nourished in the soul. Christ is the fountain: from Him the stream of life will be supplied; and, as long as it flows freely, the system is in health. And, therefore, union with Him is the source of strength and the ground of hope. We have had but slight experience in the Christian walk if we have not learnt our weakness; if we have not felt that, whatever may have been the power of evil within us, before we were conscious of its presence, the sense of indwelling sin in the renewed heart is even more humiliating.

For it is not merely that we fall under

occasional temptation, nor that we come short of acknowledged duty,—but, do not the consciences of Christians testify that the experience of every day is such as to make them blush? Is not the enemy still within the bosom, and his power so great, that they often faint in the conflict, and seem on the very verge of despair? Even whilst the heart is faithful to its allegiance, must they not avow that they are but too frequently overpowered in the outworks; and that nothing but the presence of their great Captain can save the citadel.

But His promise is, that He will be *there*: that He will dwell in them, and make His abode with them, and that the *hearts* of His people shall be the habitation and the temple of the triune God. And this is the mysterious union, of which the nearest human relationship is only an imperfect emblem. The tie of blood,—the parental bond,—the fraternal connexion,—the marriage identity—are inadequate symbols: and even when all employed,—when the collective names of father, brother, husband, intimate the closeness of the affinity, language and experience fall short of the truth; and the union of

the Church with its Head remains unparalleled by any earthly prototype.

By the work of the Redeemer every want of the redeemed is anticipated and supplied. Does the frailty of our nature, the still pregnant germ of evil, involve us in continual sin? The sacrifice once offered is of perpetual efficacy. Is our deficiency so great, that no service of our own is worthy to be offered? The vicarious righteousness of the Saviour once effected, intercedes for us for ever, before the throne of God. In Christ we are justified.—“His righteousness covers our unrighteousness.” His raiment without seam is the vesture of the church; and in it she appears—without spot or blemish—arrayed as a bride for her espousals.

To imagine that, for the appropriation of the blessings purchased for us by Christ, a personal claim must be established, is to counteract the gratuitousness of the gift. “If salvation be of grace, it is not of works,—otherwise grace is no more grace.” And besides, we have nothing but poverty to recommend us, and out of poverty nothing can be bought. No;—we must

come, as the typical Joshua—the representative of the church did,—to the mercy seat, with garments soiled and unwashed, in order to receive the change of raiment—the everlasting righteousness of the Great High Priest, which is “unto and upon all them that believe.”*

Faith is the hand that takes the investiture; and thus we are said to be justified by faith. Yet faith is the instrument, not the cause, of justification. It *originates* in a higher source. Nor can the hand itself be stretched out until the power of extension is imparted. As the man with the withered arm could not have put it forth, until muscular energy had been restored, and the nervous irritation of the member had given symptom of returning life,—so neither can the spiritual arm be extended, until vitality is infused;—and then the effort and the cure are simultaneous.

It is the reference of salvation to its source which constitutes the Christian's security. The love of God knows no change. And therefore

* Zechariah, iii. 3, 4.

its earliest manifestation is a pledge of its endurance. We read of the Redeemer, "that having loved His own, He loved them unto the end:" and in this trait we recognise the character of Deity. Human affection often fails, — human tenderness varies, — but God's love is unchangeable. And on this assurance the believer rests. Can I trace the stream of life to its source, and not follow it to the ocean? Yet thither it must flow, and there discharge its accumulated waters.

And this conviction sets the seal to Christian peace. But it can be an individual consolation, only when the *tokens* of God's love are found within. The chain must be complete. If two links of it,—the first and last, as Archbishop Leighton says,—are "up in heaven, in God's own hand, the middle one is let down to us;" and by this only, which is visible, can we ascertain the others. And thus we can understand the exhortation, and its motive,—to "make our calling and election sure,"—because, "it is God that worketh in us."

Nothing short of an assured hope can stay the soul in the trials of life, or appease the

solicitudes of a troubled breast. Are we young, in health, and in prosperity? — Hope, possibly, may be strong within us; — our pulse may beat high with the promise and prospect of pleasure or success: — but what do we anticipate? Shall we forget the casualties of which we have daily warnings? — shall we suppose our dreams realised, our fondest visions achieved, — and honour, fame, or, at least, domestic happiness waiting upon our steps — casting a halo round our path, and filling our hearts with gladness?

Still — where is our security? What if we knew that all this bliss would attend us to the tomb, we must then be deprived of it. And if maturity has already taught us the swift advance of years, — if it has shed its sobered tint upon the future; if it has made us familiar with the features of death, and, in the dissolution of others, has given us a presage of our own, — do not these symptoms of decay embitter the enjoyment of all earthly good? Are there not moments when we start back even from our dearest blessings, — when the very preciousness of an object makes us tremble; — when the happy laugh of

a darling child, or the fond embrace of a friend excites a pang of apprehension ; — when, in the midst of wishes realised, hopes accomplished, of gaiety — wealth — love, — there comes a blast over the soul, — a withering foreboding, which no human precaution can prevent, nor earthly joy allay ?

It cannot but be our desire, if we reflect at all on the precariousness of present things, to establish ourselves on some securer footing. And, if we are mothers, it must surely be our most earnest wish, that our children should realise the end of their existence, and be permanently happy. To teach them, however, the way to be so, we must be ourselves instructed : our own minds must be established in the truth. We must know the way of peace by our own experience, if we would show it to those who are to follow our steps.

An experimental and practical acquaintance with religion is, in truth, essential to female excellence. It is indispensable to the well-being of the sex, and to the discharge of their most important duties. Without it, they are unsettled in a point which involves interests of the

first magnitude, and to which nothing but an unreasonable folly and thoughtlessness can render them indifferent.

Still, it may be asked, can nothing, short of closing with mysteries so high, impart peace? Is there no moderated scheme, which can satisfy, without disquieting — which can instruct in duty, without perplexing with doctrine; and which, if it does not inspire confidence as to the future, at least encourages hope?

But is it a hope, vague and undefined, that can satisfy the inquirer after truth, or set to rest the gloomy forebodings of conscience, or cheer the afflicted spirit, in the hour of its bereavement? Assuredly not. It is the hope that is based upon the whole counsel of God, and confirmed by an internal witness, that can alone stand the shock of storms, such as frequent our atmosphere. It is this anchor, sure and steadfast, that entereth in within the veil; and which there, in the secret of the inner temple grasps the Rock of Ages, and rides secure on the foundation of Eternal Love. And *, — “blessed for ever and ever be that

* Hooker's Sermon on Habakkuk, i. 4.

mother's child, whom faith hath made the child of God ! The earth may shake, the pillars of the world may tremble under us, the countenance of the heaven may be appalled, the sun may lose his light, the moon her beauty, the stars their glory,—but concerning those that trust in God, if the fire have proclaimed itself unable to singe a hair of their heads,—what is there in this world that shall change their hearts, overthrow their faith, alter their affection towards God, or the affection of God to them ? If I be of this note, who shall make a separation between me and my God ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? No : I am persuaded, that neither tribulation, nor anguish, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, nor death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall ever prevail so far over me. I know in whom I have believed ; I am not ignorant whose precious blood has been shed for me ; I have a

Shepherd full of kindness, full of care, and full of power: unto him I commit myself; his own finger hath engraven this sentence in the tablet of my heart, — ‘Satan hath desired to winnow thee as wheat, but I have prayed that thy faith fail not:’ therefore the assurance of my hope I will labour to keep as a jewel unto the end; and by labour, through the gracious mediation of His prayer, I shall keep it.”

This confidence makes no approach to presumption; it has no tendency to render us otherwise than vigilant. For it can be in exercise no longer than it has pledges to appeal to; and of the existence of such pledges, watchfulness itself is the criterion. Our own sedulity is a proof of the Divine interest for us, because it is a fruit of Christ’s intercession on our behalf.

Christian hope is a sanctifying principle, — for its object is the fruition of God. It is this, for which the renewed spirit longs. It is this, which constitutes its heaven. And it is this, which will surpass all that the most spiritual mind has conceived, or special manifestations of God made known. The beloved disciple, in the

island of vision,—the apostle of the Gentiles, between earth and heaven, saw, even in their unutterable revelations, only an imperfect picture of the glory that is to come.

For we have promise of a brighter day than earth or heaven has yet disclosed. The dawn of the resurrection morn will penetrate the tombs of the saints, and unseal the eyes of those that sleep in Christ. Incarnation points, with a certain light, to the manifestation of the sons of God. Its closing mystery is—the redemption of the body. The tribes of the redeemed shall walk in their glorified forms, in the streets of the New Jerusalem, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

In this blessed assurance, Christians meet their last conflict. They undergo the penalty of the flesh,—but its sting is removed; they pass through the dark valley,—but the glory of the Celestial City shines beyond; they encounter their last enemy,—but it is to conquer and destroy.

“ Father! in Christ we live, and Christ in Thee —
Eternal Thou, and everlasting we.

The heir of heaven, henceforth I fear not death :
In Christ I live ! in Christ I draw the breath
Of the true life ! . . .
Is that a death-bed where a Christian lies ?
Yes ! but not his — 't is death itself there dies. "•

* Coleridge.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIANITY — PRACTICAL.

IN all human sciences, we learn to distinguish between a theorist, and a man of practical wisdom. We find that it is not enough to reason upon abstract principles,—that results, however fairly they may seem to be deduced, are not always verified by experience; and that, either from some flaw in the chain, some imperfection in the moral or physical agents, some let and obstruction, for which calculation had not been made, the end is not what was looked for. The man of study, intent only upon diagrams, adjusts his calculations upon what he considers infallible data,—proportions in his own mind force to force,—draws the balance in his own favour, and, with all the enthusiasm of successful discovery, anticipates the achievement of his brilliant project. He

sees, perhaps, in his mind's eye, the carriage of the railroad distanced, and the leviathan of the sea propelled without the cumbrous apparatus of steam. But the practised mechanic destroys the illusion, detects at once some counter-acting power, and proves that the engine, however ingenious and elaborate, will not work.

In the same way, the political economist, deep in philosophy and statistics, expatiates in the sphere of his own imaginings — projects plans for the amelioration of society, and longs for power to put them in execution. But whilst he argues, it may be, from true principles, he forgets the subjects which these are to affect; whilst he reckons on the operation of certain propensities, he does not calculate on the opposite bias; and, therefore, experience too often proves the fallacy of his projects, and brings disappointment to his schemes.

But the Divine Architect of the Christian economy has provided against failure, and has adapted, in all respects, the means to the end. Not only is the machinery perfect in itself, but it is calculated for every variety of obstruction;

and when its motion is in any way retarded, there is still provided a fresh incentive to perpetuate the action.

The object of the Christian scheme is, the restoration of its disciples to their pristine likeness of their Creator. To effect this all its apparatus is subservient. Still, it is remarkable that, whilst its doctrines involve this as a consequence, the result is furthered by more direct appliances. Precept stimulates the convictions of the renewed heart,—the movements of sin are checked in their birth by the warnings of Scripture; and the detail of Christian ethics is explained, and insisted on, by express and positive command. And thus, whilst Christian faith of itself renovates the soul, and true morality can have no existence, except as springing from this, as a principle, still it is not solely by an exhibition of abstract doctrine that the character of the disciple is perfected. The Divine Teacher takes into account the subject to be influenced,—the hindrance to the full operation of the system, arising from the perverseness of the moral recipient,—and therefore provides additional aids to meet the exigence.

And these are no more to be neglected, than are the mainsprings of the machinery. They are essential to the progress and completion of the work, and bear the stamp of infinite wisdom.

In our own conduct,—in that connection which bears the closest resemblance to the relation of God to his creatures,—we adopt, if we are wise, a similar course. As parents, our first object is to inspire our children with a reverential affection towards ourselves. We know that, unless they love us, we cannot expect their obedience. And we, therefore, lay ourselves out to gain their love. We believe that it is of the utmost importance to engage not only their gratitude, but their esteem and friendship. But though we know that filial love must develop itself in acts pleasing to a parent, that affection, of itself, assimilates those who are united by its tie,—we should feel that we very imperfectly discharged our duty, if we left even *this* principle entirely to its own actings; if we did not require obedience by express command; if we did not instruct our children in the nature of our own wishes; if we did not positively,

and in detail, intimate, that such things they were to do, and such to shun.

And if this be our own procedure, recommended at once by judgment and affection, we cannot but see the wisdom of a similar course, as pursued by the Highest Intelligence. Nor can we doubt but that it is our own duty to concur in the line thus marked out; and, in our exposition of the counsel of God,—both as it regards others and ourselves,—to keep strictly to the model set before us.

The Scriptures themselves afford a striking illustration of the principle in question. And the admission of this helps us to explain what, abstractedly, might appear paradoxical. Why, it might be asked, if the doctrines of the Gospel induce holiness as a consequence, should it be enforced as a command? Why, if they originate a character, should duties, the result of that character, be urged by special precept? Why—but for the same reason that parents, even though they do not question the affection of their children, inculcate the submission which is its fruit,—and explain, and exhort to

the individual actions which are the natural expression of filial love.

Religious instruction, to be in any respect adequate, must proceed upon the same system. We are taught this by analogy, and taught it by the exemplar which Divine wisdom has furnished. The inspired writers are as jealous for purity of life as for purity of doctrine; and, however carefully they lay the foundation, they are no less precise in arranging the superstructure.

And, therefore, in communicating that knowledge, which of all others is most important, we should be on our guard not to fall short of the whole truth. And this caution has reference, not merely to inaccurate, but to *deficient* statements. That statement, for instance, is deficient, which, whilst it fairly expounds the doctrinal system of the Gospel, and even implies that holiness is the consequence of its reception, does not explain the nature of holiness,—state its principle—particularize its duties, and, in direct terms, insist upon its cultivation.

Antinomianism, properly so called, is of rare occurrence. That is, there are probably very

few, who cast aside the obligations of morality, upon the assumption that they are obsolete and not binding upon Christians. The epithet of Antinomian is, by some, applied to the Gospel itself, — but all, who are really acquainted with Scriptural truth, know the fallacy of the charge.

Still, the practical tendency to antinomianism is deeply seated in the breast, and it shows itself in various ways. It has been the root of error, and of heresy. To find a substitute for holiness is a favourite project of the natural mind : hence the various observances of superstition, which ordinarily are nothing but expedients to avoid the spirituality of the Divine law.

The principles of the world are antinomian, — because they lower the standard of true morality, and substitute in religion an external for an internal service.

The principles of such as attribute to their own works a saving efficacy, are antinomian, — because they ascribe to imperfection what perfection alone can effect, and, under the cloak of zeal for the law of God, mitigate its requisitions.

Every one-sided view of truth itself, is antinomian. That, which, whilst it allows, in any degree veils, the doctrines of grace, is antinomian, because it obscures what alone can enlighten and sanctify the soul. And that which, unfolding the theory only, fails to enforce and specify its fruits, verges likewise to antinomianism.

So that, although the term is often unadvisedly applied, and, in its full meaning, perhaps, but seldom merited, antinomianism is no mere phantom. Like many other evil principles latent in the heart, it cannot bear the light of day—it cannot stand a full disclosure; it is not in its own likeness, but in one of its cognate forms, that it is ordinarily met with.

The propensity to antinomianism, as it originates in the innate inclination to sin, so is it co-existent with it. As long as the evil bias is in force, antinomianism, in one shape or other, is palatable.

On this account, it is necessary to be on our guard at every stage. In early instruction, it is not enough, as has before been said, to lay down a correct scheme, even if we infer its

consequences. We must argue forward from the scheme to the consequences, and back again from the result to the system. If the tree is good, the fruit will be good. The converse likewise must be insisted on:—if the fruit is *not* good, neither is the tree.

Nor is this merely an elementary point,—it involves a warning never inapplicable. There is so much that is fascinating in the scheme of Christianity, that we may expatiate in it, without realising its end. We may know it intellectually; not only so,—we may taste and relish its mysteries—delight in exploring its unsearchable depths, in reading in these the counsels of the Most High, in tracing the adjustment of its several parts—their coherence—applicability—wisdom. And in this contemplation the religion of some persons seems to consist. Their individual practice, indeed, may not discredit their profession; but still they have little delight in practical views. They relish, only, the *deep* things of faith. They seek the exposition of transcendent doctrines—the unfolding of the secrets of heaven—the exhibition of the Divine purpose, as it respects God's

chosen people; whilst of any more simple, and, as they may deem it, initiatory topic, they become weary. The mention of holiness, or of duty, chills them. Theology is to them a science — a study — an intellectual refreshment; but as an influential principle, it possesses little interest, — at least, as it respects the detail of conduct. Although they allow its practical bearing, they have little pleasure in hearing it so applied.

Such a state is assuredly not healthful. To a mind thus attuned the tone of Scripture is too low. Many portions, even of the Word of God, must seem to it insipid: and for not merely the elementary instruction, but for much that is addressed to churches, in all the vigour of their spiritual health, it has lost its relish.

Such a mind may, indeed, consider, that doctrinal truth is all-sufficient; and that exhortation is unnecessary where holiness is assured.

But this is surely being wise above what is written. It is setting aside the model of Scripture, and arguing from theory rather than from practical wisdom. Were the propensity

to evil wholly eradicated; had the infused principle no obstacle to its full development and operation, it might be left to its spontaneous movements; but the perpetual check of indwelling corruption must be met and overcome by new and direct incentives.

And where these are neglected or despised, it is not surprising that the result is defective. The fruit will not be matured unless the culture is adequate.

It is not, however, in the prominent parts of Christian conduct, that the deficiency in such cases will probably appear. The mind, that has received the first principles of the Gospel, has within it a safeguard against flagrant offences. But there is considerable danger, lest the omission, or the depreciation, in any degree, of practical exhortation, may produce tempers not honourable to religious profession, and a carelessness in the ordinary conduct.

The faults, to which those who have received the doctrines of the Gospel are peculiarly exposed, may assume a form which reconciles and even recommends them to the religious pro-

fessor. Sectarianism and exclusiveness, for instance, are tempers not congenial to Christianity; still they are the not unusual concomitants of extreme views. And why?—because they take the guise of attachment to Gospel doctrine, — of the adoption of a high standard, or, of an uncompromising avowal of unpopular truths.

These are the blemishes often charged upon Christians by people of the world; and it is matter of shame and regret that they cannot always be disowned. We must, it is to be feared, admit that they do sometimes disfigure the high professor; that, whilst the picture, sketched by an enemy, is overdrawn, its resemblance cannot wholly be denied: and thus that the faults which, in the eyes of irreligious persons, are occasion of prejudice and blame to many who feel themselves involved in the reproach, are a matter of deep grief, and, probably also, of personal annoyance.

For not only does the injury which attaches to religion, from the exhibition of these blemishes, give them pain, but they themselves often experience their effect. They have the

full benefit of the narrow-mindedness, which confines the odour of sanctity to its peculiar sect ; and of the unreasonableness, which, without respect to the claims or opinions of others, requires an exclusive regard to its own fancies, and an unqualified adoption of its own views.

Partial statements naturally lead to these results. Even the secret dissatisfaction they produce occasions impatience, if not jealousy. For we are apt to be intolerant of the slightest difference, when we are not quite sure of our own footing ; and intemperance often originates from a disavowed suspicion that our own scheme is scarcely defensible.

Thus may many of those desightly blots which we have been lamenting, be accounted for. They are the symptoms and the results of a disproportionate and distorted view. And, while they have afforded grounds for reproach, they have paved the way for graver offences. They have been the presage of those swervings from sound doctrine, and departures from the ways of peace and holiness, which, from time

to time, have tried the faith, and grieved the hearts of Christians, and have been a cause of scandal to the unbelieving and ungodly.

Such is the human heart, that whatever we are not reminded of we soon lose sight of. There is no surer way of undermining a doctrine than keeping it out of view; and it is therefore only natural that the consequence of the omission of practical exhortation should be an abatement in the moral standard. We cannot, indeed, calculate the extent of the mischief. We are never more in danger than when we despise danger; and, on the contrary, vigilance is a means and a pledge of our security. And where a partial view of the Gospel has led into doctrinal error, on the one side, or practical antinomianism, on the other; where it has terminated in a secession from the truth, or a re-adoption of worldly principles and courses; we may trace the progress step by step, and feel that the result is only a realisation of what the earliest symptoms might have led us to anticipate.

A distorted exposition of the Gospel system has also a tendency to unsettle the mind. It

may be, in some cases, doubtful whether instability is the cause or the effect; but, whilst we admit that an inconstant temper is disposed to tire of the beaten track, and to evince caprice, as well with respect to opinions as to persons, we must also allow that nothing is more calculated to induce wavering than the adoption of any perverted view. It throws us off our balance; and it is then a chance to which side we lean.

There have not been wanting exemplifications of this result. Persons who, from the preponderance they have attached to certain tenets, have been on the very verge of error on one side, have, under a new influence, been exposed to equal hazard in a contrary direction; or the foundation of their faith has been so shaken, that they have lost ground altogether. Thus we have seen secessions and schisms, which, for a time, have prevailed and distracted the peace of the Church, terminate in one or other of these results. Some, who have been led to diverge from the path of safety, may have retraced their steps; and, though they have been in slippery places, may have regained their

footing on the rock, — and may appear to stand more firmly from having trod a perilous path : but some, on the contrary, have been so tossed about by every unstable wind, that, at last, they have sought a false anchorage in the comprehensive haven of unbelief. And not a few have verified the maxim, that extremes meet, — and have been forward to adopt notions the very opposite of their former creed, — with which, perhaps, the only thing in common is the allurements of novelty.

It is an indication of spiritual health when practical instruction is palatable. If we are really striving to attain proficiency in Christian graces, we shall not be unwilling to hear them recommended and enforced. But when we shrink from all such exhortation ; when the exposition of duty is irksome to us ; when nothing but doctrinal speculations (and these of an exclusive and exciting nature) suit our taste, — there is reason to apprehend that the searching scrutiny of a practical appeal is not agreeable, because it may occasionally wound the conscience, and, in some measure, disturb our self-complacent repose.

Women, from the quality and training of

their minds, are in greater danger than the other sex of adopting superficial views. They may be deficient in the intellectual comprehensiveness which embraces a *whole* subject, considers it in all its bearings, and thus obtains a correct notion of its points and of their individual and relative value: and therefore they have furnished too frequent examples of aberrations from sound doctrine, and been prone to errors which have arisen from partial statements.

But a distinct perception of truth is a preservation both against speculative delusion, and practical deficiency. Those who are grounded in the principles of their faith find in these solid satisfaction, and are not easily persuaded to relinquish them for more tempting theories. They also feel them to be constraining motives to moral improvement.

Christian holiness cannot exist without Christian faith. It has no name, no being, but as coexistent with the belief of spiritual truth. It cannot be identified with any outward signs, although it is expressed by them; for it is a frame, a constitution, a temper, — but not any single *act*.

It is, in short, a principle, — and nothing

more than a modification of the principle of love to God ; — for it is the assimilation of the soul to God, — and this is involved in the love of Him.

Moral precepts, therefore, are not the whole of Christian ethics. The inculcation of them, without reference to evangelical motive, is not the inculcation of Christian holiness. In the same way that a suasion to individual acts of charity is not a suasion to the principle of benevolence, and that the performance of these does not necessarily imply the existence of benevolence, — so an exhortation to special duties does not comprise the practical instruction, nor the observance of them the evangelical holiness, of the believer.

It is of much importance to observe this distinction : for, however essential is the particularising of duties — however indispensable their fulfilment, as the indication and embodying of the internal principle, — they are only the symbol of its existence, and one efficient means of its maintenance. In the latter sense, indeed, they are remarkably available. Nothing is more conducive to growth in *spiritual* conformity to the Divine will than a conformity of conduct. The benevolent, as they

abound in works of charity, add to the stock of their own benevolence ; — their hearts enlarge as their hands give ; and the more they labour for others, the more do they overflow with love to them, and the more intense are their desires to do them good. And thus it is in Christian attainment. The more pains-taking the obedience, the more ardent will be the longings after that entire assimilation to his Divine Exemplar which shall be perfected in His immediate presence.

In like manner, as we infer the existence of benevolence from benevolent actions, so we may fairly infer that Christian principle is in exercise from Christian conduct. The latter is intimately connected with the former ; and, in some cases, has seemed even to originate it. It has, in these instances, appeared to have a reflex action : and at least has been the channel through which the principle has been infused, which alone can give to outward deportment consistency and worth.

It is, however, by considering holiness as an internal sentiment that we are to see its obligations and understand its influence. Do this, and live, is an arbitrary command, — it is the primeval

covenant; — it is, — however modified, — salvation of merit, not of grace. But view holiness as an assimilation of heart to God, and thus as the end and essence of salvation, and its necessity and connexion with the Christian scheme are at once apparent. It is the immediate fruit of love to God, — the indispensable qualification for His presence. It is, in short, an incipient heaven.

The love that is first diffused into the heart is the love of gratitude. It is the sentiment that is generated from an experience of the immeasurable love of God, in His favour to the undeserving. But the love which results from an appreciation of the Divine character is a more exalted affection, and involves more immediately the principle of holiness.

The love of esteem, however, must originate in the love of gratitude. It is not till the heart is won by the discovery of the special tenderness of God, that its enmity towards Him is subdued, and an appreciation of His perfections springs up in the place of disesteem. And this is the true principle of morality; for it leads the soul to contemplate the Divine Ex-

emplar with that delight which transforms it, in some measure, into the same image. Imperfect, indeed, is the copy,—still it is a likeness. The outline is faint, but the identity can be recognised. There are countless blemishes, but these do not wholly obscure the portrait; and one day, they will all be obliterated, and the features will shine out clear and bright in resemblance and relief, and will realise, to the utmost limit of created excellence, the beauty of holiness.

By this view of Christian morality, we perceive its extent. We perceive that it comprises graces as well as duties, — affections as well as acts. With reference to every virtue, it involves the principle, as well as the fruit. It is a new nature, not a mere outward reformation.

Thus, — a renunciation of the sins and follies of the world implies more than a breaking off from sinful or worldly practices. Here, more, perhaps, than in any other characteristic of a change of heart, there is danger of self-delusion. It might seem that the outward sacrifice would imply the internal dispo-

tion; but too frequently it is not so. There may be much abstinence, and still no spiritual-mindedness. In some cases, the abstinence may be matter of necessity, and then it implies no self-denial; or it may be superstitious, and then it is of no value as a spiritual service.

In families, for instance, where a religious economy is maintained, the members may comply with regulations, and adopt a deportment, which identifies them outwardly with the most serious persons. Young women, who naturally fall in with the customs of home, — and who, from the restricted circle in which they move, are not exposed to exciting temptations, — may, almost without questioning, conform to a strict rule which marks them as distinct from the world, and seems, even to themselves, to accredit their title to real religion. And still the vital spark may be wanting, and the heart may never have rendered its allegiance to its rightful Lord.

Therefore, to urge restrictions, otherwise than as they are involved in the internal principle, is beginning at the wrong end, and may lead to much error. At the same time, it must be al-

lowed that to neglect the landmark is even more perilous. For, if we permit a latitude of practice, from the fear lest strictness should identify religion with outward observance, we incur the charge of inconsistency, and sanction a laxity which our judgment disapproves. We should, indeed, bear in mind that, in relation both to the general principle of Christian morality, and to its individual features, the sentiment must be generated in the heart, and then developed in the conduct. *Internally* the root of holiness germinates, and expands into the particular graces which form the Christian *temper*; — *externally*, these all put forth their blossoms, and bear fruit, and produce the several virtues which characterise and adorn the Christian *deportment*. And thus the process of sanctification is carried on, and matured; the heart becomes more and more fit for its celestial dwelling-place, and the character more conformed to that evangelical standard, which is the object of its imitation.

To the two comprehensive principles of Christian ethics — justice and mercy — may be reduced every individual grace. And thus,

the conspicuous exhibition of these Divine features in the plan for the redemption of sinners becomes the means of originating the transcript of them in the heart, and consequently is the groundwork of Christian excellence. The rendering to all their due, is the law of justice : — the doing to others as to ourselves, that of mercy and kindness. And nothing short of these is the aim, though, alas ! in this state, they are not the realised attainment, of the Christian.

For it is the distinction of Gospel morality that it is *perfect* in its character. Every other system proposes a false or an inadequate standard. It accommodates its requisitions to human tastes, or lowers them to human capabilities. But the Christian's rule is perfect ; and therefore it is always in advance of what is attained. It is, like the ideal beauty, present to the mind of the artist, before which his sublimest achievements in his own estimation fade and fail.

Thus, with reference to the first and most sacred obligations, the worship and the service of God, the offering which the Gospel requires is entire. It is the loyal unswerving allegiance of the heart. True, indeed, that this is never

fully rendered, until the enemy's country is passed through, and its snares are left behind. But this undivided devotion, though not accomplished in endeavours, though not realized, is followed after with persevering and unwearied effort.

And hence proceed the sacrifices which Christians make for the cause of God. All they have, and more than all, is due; and therefore the expression of their hearts is, — what shall we render? It is their shame that they do no more. Why does the missionary brave climate, peril, hardship, and withering, often unproductive, toil? Why do he and his delicate, though not less enduring partner, undertake a service which often renders life one long privation? Why does the minister at home, in labours equally assiduous, — in weakness, perhaps, of body, and in depression of spirit, pour forth on the altar of the sanctuary a willing oblation of himself? And why does the private Christian — the daughter, wife, or mother, — in the habitual sacrifice of will, in the quiet endurance of suffering or reproach, in the pains-taking performance of benevolent

offices, unweariedly persevere in a course which, while it may involve much hardship, offers not the stimulus of notoriety or fame? Why,—but that in all these there is an abiding conviction that their obligation infinitely exceeds their power of fulfilment, and that whatever may be their service or their sacrifice, it must fall immeasurably short of the return they owe.

The principle of justice involves humility; for if humility is the only fitting posture of the creature towards the Creator, much more is it of the pardoned offender towards the Author of forgiveness. And this sentiment, really generated, is developed also in all its actings. It is exemplified in every relation. It shows itself in an appropriate bearing towards all.

In education, it is not enough to inculcate this principle. We must, as in other cases, particularise results; for it is essential, even in childhood, to establish on a high footing the rules of social deference.

Of these rules filial respect is the earliest exemplification, and it is the fairest promise for their general fulfilment. It is the first modification of that sentiment of veneration

which in its highest form is entertained by the Christian worshipper towards the Divine Parent; and which, in proportion to the degree of superiority, is felt by those, whose minds are under proper discipline, towards all who claim respect. In social intercourse, the sentiment of respect is the source of courtesy. It imparts to manner the delicacy which is essential to its perfection. It especially belongs to woman; for, as she requires respect as her privilege, she must be scrupulous in rendering it where it is due. And it is a proof of a well regulated mind to pay appropriate deference. Whether it be age, station, relationship, or office, it is a religious duty to admit and to observe the claim. True Christian feeling will dictate the expression of respect. It will teach youth to defer to experience, — the instructed to reverence the instructor.

It is to be regretted that due reverence is not always rendered, even by pious women, to the pastoral relationship. Yet, if there is one office which, more than any other, entitles to observance, it is surely that of a minister; — if there be

any character which more than any other claims reverential attachment, it is that of the faithful labourer in the Lord's vineyard, the dispenser of the truths of God. And therefore it ill becomes any, who profess to acknowledge the ministerial claim, virtually to disregard it, — to indulge in censorious remarks, — to nurture a fastidious temper, or to wound in any way the feelings of those towards whom, officially and personally, the sentiment should pre-eminently be that of tenderness and respect.

Truth, again, is an essential part of justice: for truth, in word and deed, is the universal debt we owe; and its obligation is universally admitted. And there are few qualities so intrinsically valuable in relation to social worth, or so satisfactorily indicative of a right frame. Still, though a deficiency in truth, even in worldly estimation, implies a stain, there are, perhaps, few virtues of such rare fulfilment. Truth is the expression of a pure conscience,—the outward embodying of that internal rectitude which is the reflection of Perfect Truth. But too often does the counterfeit pass current for the real coin.

Profession is often the enemy of truth. Profession, in the first instance, may not involve insincerity; but it may induce it. We may mean what we say, when we profess great intentions; but, either our fervour may diminish, or our capacity of fulfilment may not be commensurate with our enthusiasm of purpose; and then we may be tempted to continue profession as a cloak for inconstancy or want of power. Thus, profession may become mere cant or lip-service, — than which nothing is so injurious to moral uprightness, and so detrimental to the cause of virtue.

Faithfulness is therefore the concomitant of truth. It is associated with it in the Divine character; and it is necessary to its existence as a human virtue. Faithfulness in our engagements, — truth in all our transactions, — strict integrity, not merely when we meet the eyes of men, but in our secret thoughts, — are characteristics of the Christian conduct, and distinguish it from that which merely seeks the approbation of the world. Evangelical uprightness is, indeed, quite a different thing from worldly honour. It is the internal love of

truth, which shows itself in seeking, speaking, and keeping truth; and is the consequence of a belief in the truth, and an acquaintance with Him who is *The Truth*. And this real delight in truth is a Christian happiness. For, certainly, as the great philosopher of our country says, "It is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth."*

The love of truth is evidenced in the lesser as well as in the graver transactions of life, — in things of trivial moment, as in those of stirring interest. The love of truth shows itself in testimony, — testimony as to indifferent matters; in the accurate selection of circumstances, and in the faithful expression of our opinions. And it is such a love of truth which gives, as it were, a pledge for our stability, — a love of truth for its own sake; and though involving, still not to be merged in, any other honourable sentiment. For, as has been well observed, "It is in what are termed trifles that the lover of truth can evince the

* Bacon's *Essays*.

sincerity of his attachment. I may abhor a slanderous lie, a boasting lie, a dishonest lie ; but if I practise lies which bear no other character than that of simple deception, I show, in the above instances only, that I hate ill nature, that I hate vanity, that I hate dishonesty, but not that I hate or disapprove of falsehood." *

There is no more important sentiment to instil, even in infancy, than a love of truth. As Doctor Johnson wisely says, " If a child relates any occurrence, and mentions that it took place in one window, when it really happened in another, he ought to be set right." The opposite propensity is, alas ! often one of the earliest symptoms exhibited of the natural depravation of the heart. The child that from its birth has seemed to breathe only the atmosphere of truth, seeks to screen its infant fault from the eyes even of its tender parent, and learns to lisp a lie. And deeply does the spirit of the Christian mother grieve at this sad indication of the germ of evil ! Deeply does it mourn at this too plain indication that the bias is

* Essays by the Rev. H. Woodward.

perverted, and that the inclination, which sways the will, is to evil rather than to good !

Falsehood is justly considered as the most serious offence of childhood ; and those parents who are the most lenient in their discipline, are often disposed to correct it with a severity which no other fault provokes. It is no doubt important to mark it with a stigma which may dwell on the recollection ; but it is also important to mark it as a *sin*. It is in this light that it should be characterized with pre-eminent abhorrence ; and the aim in its reproof should be, to excite in the mind of the youngest offender that sorrow which arises not merely from a sense of parental displeasure, but from the consciousness of the spiritual offence. And thus the child should be led to understand and feel that Christianity is the essence of truth ; and that without the love of truth there can be no love of God, no likeness to Him, no approach to goodness.

With regard, indeed, to Christian conduct generally, the object of the religious parent should be to realize the connexion between every grace and the principle from which it

flows. The duties of domestic and social life, — the tempers, which, more even than outward actions, constitute the character, and determine its proficiency, — the efforts of benevolence, which, themselves the exemplifications of the law of mercy, are binding on the Christian even by the law of Gospel justice: all these are inseparable parts of that holiness of which the ground-work is *Love*. And it is by the development of this truly Christian sentiment, in all its bearings, — both as it respects its Highest Source, and transfers itself from Him to all whom for His sake it ought to affect, — that the religious and moral character is matured, and the soul qualified to attain the end of its existence, namely, the enjoyment of that Divine Being who only can satisfy it. In the transfusion of this heavenly sentiment into the heart its renovation consists. Where the Holy Spirit finds entrance the love of God is shed abroad, and draws up the spirit to Him for whom it longs; and thus is realized the progressive sanctification of the believer. It is realized in the perpetual aspirations after an eternal portion, — in the increasing insight into the

excellencies of the Divine character,—in the fuller assurance of the special favour and love of God,—and in the more implicit confidence and entire repose in His faithfulness.

Those who have sought God early, will in this way find His promises made good. They will thus grow in grace; they will advance, trembling it may be, yet securely; conscious of but small attainment, but still of progress,—of inherent weakness, but of infused strength; and believing that their steps are assured, their refreshments provided, and their eternal home prepared.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

"The mind that lies fallow but a single day, sprouts up in follies that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous culture."—ADDISON.

THE distinctions of society are not likely to be felt as invidious, so long as the intellectual superiority of the higher ranks keeps pace with their elevation; and so long as they fulfil the offices assigned to them with the same assiduity, with which those of an inferior grade accomplish their daily task. Labour of one kind or another is the condition of humanity; and though in some cases the obligation is chiefly of a moral nature, and therefore not absolutely compulsory, it is no less binding as a duty, and no less essential to the general welfare. The zeal of the higher classes, indeed, in the prosecution of their functions, is even more important than the industry of the lower; for, besides the superior

value of their labour, their assiduity is an incentive and an example to those below them, and is the best guarantee for expecting the improvement of the latter. On the contrary, we all know that the inactivity and luxuriousness of an aristocracy are amongst the first symptoms of civil decrepitude, and that they presage and induce either internal revolution, or the total disruption and ruin of an empire.

The necessity of occupation should therefore be one of the earliest lessons instilled in education, and happily it is one which childhood is not averse to learn. However averse very young people may be to *steady* application, childhood is the time when employment is the *least* irksome, and when there is, perhaps, the least disposition to entire indolence; and therefore it is the period when the habit of occupation should be formed, and when the principle should be impressed that idleness is both inglorious and sinful.

The obligation to labour amongst the higher classes is, it has been remarked, chiefly of a moral nature. As it regards women, this is generally true. The other sex are for the most part under a natural as well as civil

obligation to some sort of toil ; and even those, who are professionally free, are often, from station or other circumstances, equally subjected to the yoke. But it is the privilege of women of the superior order to be provided for, served, and protected by others; and any labour, therefore, which they undertake is chiefly voluntary.

As nothing, however, that is useful can be achieved without effort—as intellectual culture can neither be attained nor kept up without much application, it will be allowed that the end of existence cannot be answered, nor our position in society maintained, unless we seek out our share of wholesome occupation, and employ ourselves in such seemly and honourable exercises, as may ensure to us consideration and respect. The women of oriental climes may waste their lives on silken couches, content to recline in listless luxury, and inhale the breezes of their cedar fans : but this is a melancholy proof of the low condition of the sex in certain countries. The spinner who turns her wheel,—the gleaner who gathers up her sheaves,—even the hardy wife of the Norwegian fisher who plies her oar, and lades her bark

amid storm and tempest, fulfil a higher and a happier destiny; for they taste the reward of toil, and have the satisfaction of knowing that they live to do some good.

Christianity has raised woman to the moral and intellectual rank she holds; and the purer its form, and the more genuine its profession, the higher is the character of the sex, and the greater the respect with which it is regarded. To the superior standard of religion in this country may therefore be ascribed the excellence of English women; and in proportion as real piety increases, will be their improvement. But if they are favoured with most privileges,—if their character stands high,—if they enjoy a position superior to that of most even of their continental neighbours, their responsibility to profit by their advantages, to maintain their reputation, and to improve to the best account their privileges, is commensurately great. And, therefore, they should beware of indulging a preference of amusement to mental culture,—of frivolous pursuit to useful occupation. They should be on their guard lest refinement unfit them for exertion,—lest the appliances of

wealth enervate, and the seductions of pleasure divert them from useful employment,— and lest, above all, the excitements to every taste and fancy which are so liberally administered, and so temptingly set forth, create a dislike to whatever is sober and rational, and produce a morbid craving for dangerous stimulants.

The economy of time is important, for the attainment of what is intrinsically valuable, for the prosecution of what is useful, and for the formation of a healthful tone of mind.

There is no truth more strongly enforced by experience than that the more we know and do, the more we find that there is to be learned and effected. The trifler oppressed with *ennui* sighs to get rid of vacant hours; whilst those who have glanced with a longing eye at the innumerable avenues to knowledge, or have tasted the well-spring' of benevolence, find that life is too short a period for the accomplishment of their object and the satisfaction of their desires. The paths of knowledge and of philanthropy widen as we proceed; and as their ranges increase, our desire to embrace them becomes more ardent. The object in education should

therefore be to lead to the threshold, and to invite to the entrance, for when the first step is taken, the increase of appetite is the best pledge for perseverance.

There can be no doubt that in the attainment of useful information, or the performance of works of kindness, the time and faculties of woman are well, profitably, and suitably employed, whatever be her abilities or social position. Of course, in the selection both of intellectual pursuits and benevolent designs discretion should be used; but, generally speaking, personal improvement, and the contributing to the happiness of others, are the ends which a woman should have in view, and which education should teach her to prosecute. They are also the criteria by which she may test her pursuits, and select and regulate her occupations.

In considering the first of these, namely, individual improvement, we should estimate not merely the general, but the particular suitability of the pursuit, and the tendency which it has to promote the excellence and grace of the female character. Time is not lost in the

cultivation of faculties, which render woman more amiable or agreeable; or in the study of literature, which awakens her to the love of intellectual beauty. Nor is it lost in the attainment of accomplishments, for which there may be indications of a natural taste, and which, when regarded as subordinate to more important pursuits, are a refreshment to her own mind, and a means of giving pleasure to others. But time is lost in the prosecution of acquisitions, in which there is little probability of success, of accomplishments not congenial to the taste, or adapted to the station, in the multiplication of studies not essential, and for the mastering of which, there may be neither leisure nor competent ability.

The principles that we should labour early to instil, are a regard for the value of time, and an accurate estimate of the comparative importance of the calls that are made upon it. It is of great moment to impress the conscience with a feeling of responsibility in the expenditure of time, and with the duty of applying each portion of it to its best purpose. And this is effected, not merely by an appeal to reason and to

moral sense, but by establishing the habit of assiduous application. To permit listlessness in a child is a great error. Even a restless search for employment is better than an indolent contentedness with doing nothing. Not that education, in the present day is, in general, faulty in this particular. So long as young people are in their school-room, they are not suffered to rest upon their oars. Whether their application there is usually turned to the best account, and that thirst for improvement inspired which would ensure their continued progress, may be more questionable. For, as has been before remarked, the succeeding period in life is not always marked by the same assiduity. It would seem that, in some cases, the habit has been purely mechanical; that application has scarcely been regarded as a duty, or, at least, that its obligation has been thought to terminate with the discipline that enforced it. When such is the result of education, it is evident that there has been a fundamental error in its conduct, or in the use that has been made of its advantages.

The actual acquirements of early youth are

valuable chiefly as preliminary steps. They surmount some of the drudgery of learning, and give the advantage of a start over the more tardy student. And, what is of greater importance, they habituate the mind to exertion, they try its capabilities, and bring forth its latent strength. But they are too imperfect, too much the result of mere memory and instruction — too little that of thought, to be of much intrinsic value, except as the ground-work for future proficiency. They are the blossoms which give promise indeed of fruit, but which are not themselves the harvest.

When, however, the higher faculties of the mind are brought into play, when taste discovers its preferences, and judgment exercises its discrimination, and when the obligations of duty are understood in their relative bearings, and felt in their full force, then it is that knowledge of every kind turns to its true account, and that we reap the benefit of previous labour. Then, whatever has been cast into the crucible will come forth as available metal, and, by the use then made of it, will be determined its real value.

It is at this period, therefore, that assiduity should increase, not diminish ; and that, far from thinking that the work is done, there should be the greater anxiety to improve the precious moments of independence. Young women, especially, may consider youth as the period when, more than at any other, they are personally accountable for their time, and when they have more leisure, probably, than they will enjoy at any subsequent age, for intellectual advance. From the day that they leave their school-room, to that when they may be called to active family duties, they enjoy leisure which they may afterwards wish in vain to recall, and which, if trifled away, is worse than a blank in relation to future improvement. The habit of application, once lost, is with difficulty recovered ; the youthful vigour, if suffered to relax, subsides into inertness ; and the sanguine temperament that sees in difficulties only an incentive to exertion, and a sweetener of success, if it has no adequate stimulus, sinks into indifference, or seeks excitement in unprofitable pursuits.

Yet, although the consequences of the non-improvement of time in youth are so obviously

injurious, it is the period, which, of all others, perhaps, is the most frequently misemployed. If we turn to fashionable life, it is with deep concern that we must view the frivolity of the pursuits and engagements which occupy young women, on their first entrance on the world; at the profligate expenditure of their time on objects, not one of which is worthy a moment's serious notice. The whirl of a London season is an effectual antidote to reflection, and precludes even social enjoyment: nightly dissipation induces morning lassitude; and the latter yields only to the renewed excitement of the evening crowd.

To London may succeed the lounge of some frequented watering place, whose medicated spring, or far-famed physician, is to remedy what the toils of amusement have impaired, and where even provincial gaieties are sought for with feverish anxiety, and are welcomed as a means of getting rid of time.

But the country home may present a scene still more disappointing; for thither, instead of the wholesome pleasures of retirement, the early morning hours, the tranquil occupation, the day

so peacefully and healthfully varied by books, by the garden, by walks to the cottages or schools, by refreshing converse with Nature in her fairest and sublimest form, are transplanted the fictitious forms and habits of town society, and the unsuitable and vain pursuits of fashion.

Then, indeed, time hangs heaviest upon hand, and country gaieties are too dull, or of too rare occurrence to satisfy the thirst for amusement. The novel will not fill up the unrelieved hours of a rainy day, and a visit to a rural thane does little to enliven the tedium of the morning. Recourse is had to some new game, some fresh invented frolic,—perhaps, to some practical jest, of which the folly and even coarseness seem the only recommendations. Such instances may be but rare, but where they do occur, well may those, whose tastes have been formed in a better mould, look with unqualified surprise at the amusements selected by some who bear the palm of fashion, and rest at least content with their exclusion from the coterie, and with their less distinguished and more rational employments.

The votaries of pleasure seem to forget that the object of life is not amusement; that, whatever may be the privileges of their station, they are responsible for the fulfilment of its duties; and that, in truth, they never so much neglect their own happiness, or prejudice their own interest, as when they seek only momentary gratification, and weary themselves for vanity. Did they but consider how much respect a different course would ensure, how much satisfaction the right employment of hours would bring, and to what beneficial purposes, individually and collectively, they might expend leisure, they could scarcely fail to rouse themselves from inactivity, and give themselves to pursuits which become them as rational and accountable beings. It is the conviction of many, that, in the present aspect of things, there is much to excite apprehension and solicitude, that the spirit of insubordination is abroad, and that difference of station is regarded with mistaken jealousy. Alas! must we not acknowledge, that, whilst there is much to correct in the feelings and practices of the humbler ranks,

and too frequently a groundless dissatisfaction on their parts, there is also occasion for blame in those whom greater knowledge renders more responsible, and on whom it is incumbent to give the tone to society. The sight of luxuriousness or indolence in them fosters disrespect and envy; and the eyes of the people are quick to detect in their superiors blemishes, from which they flatter themselves that they are exempt. On the contrary, the belief that superiority in station does not entail inactivity,—that the higher ranks are as assiduous in the employment of their leisure, as the humbler in the prosecution of their required toil,—that the former live for themselves less even than the latter,—is above all things likely to diffuse content, and to inspire the poorer classes with affection and confidence towards those whom they thus learn to consider their benefactors.

And it must not be forgotten that women, even young women, may materially contribute to produce this impression. Let them but spend the hours that are at their disposal in profitable pursuits; let them devote the prime of their life to their own intellectual and moral culture; and they

would reap their reward in the consciousness of their individual progress, and in the increased esteem of society. And although they would lose their relish for the vapid conversation of triflers, for idle amusements, and for public display, they would feel that they were passing their time in a manner worthy intelligent beings, and their influence might be a stimulus to higher virtues in the other sex.

But even were it not so,—should they not, in this latter particular, exercise as successful a sway as might be wished, they would at least exculpate themselves from the guilt of misapplied time and abused privileges, would advance in knowledge and in grace, and would lay up a resource and a consolation for themselves in all the vicissitudes of life.

A little reflection might assuredly convince many of the gay, fluttering beings, who now adorn the circles of fashion, how derogatory to them are the follies in which they participate, how unworthy their position in society, their intellectual capacity, their early education. The benevolence of Addison led him to lament that “sufficient pains were not taken in finding

out for women proper employments," and to apply himself to remedy that deficiency. In the present day, a similar apology cannot be made. Yet, with a slight allowance for the manners of the age, is not the following portrait too descriptive of what still exists?—and can we point out any very decided superiority in the pursuits of many of our own day to those which so deservedly called forth the Spectator's strictures? "Their amusements seem contrived for them rather as they are women, than as they are reasonable creatures, and are more adapted to the sex than to the species. The toilet is their great scene of business, and the right adjusting of their hair the principal employment of their lives. The sorting of a suit of ribbons is reckoned a very good morning's work; and if they make an excursion to a mercer, or a toy shop, so' great a fatigue makes them unfit for any thing else all the day after. Their more serious occupations are sewing and embroidery, and their greatest drudgery the preparation of jellies and sweet-meats."

In the "drudgery," indeed, the fine ladies of the present day take no part; but it may be

a question whether their pursuits are more intellectual, or equally profitable.

Happily, as the censure in some cases is but too applicable, so the commendation is in others equally deserved. Amongst women of our own age, many there are, "of a more elevated life and conversation that move in an exalted sphere of knowledge and virtue, and join all the beauties of the mind" to external decorations. May the number of such increase; and may the example of their superiority be a stimulus to others to imitate them!

The preceding remarks, it may be said, apply to an individual class, and *that*, though the most important, is not the most numerous. The generality of the sex are restricted to a more humble sphere, and have not the opportunity, and, it is to be hoped, not the inclination to join in the follies of fashionable life. Yet even here it must be questioned whether there is that scrupulous regard to the value of time, especially in youth, which ensures its profitable expenditure. Here, again, as soon as the discipline of childhood is relaxed, the culture of the mind is too often intermitted.



The pursuits of young women are too frequently of a trifling nature, not calculated to improve their minds, or to render them useful in their station in life. At the very period when they should practically apply their previous acquirements,—when they should avail themselves of what they have learnt, as a matter of course they shut up their books. And though it may be natural at this age to desire recreation, and young people may themselves look forward to it as the period of cessation from their tasks, and as the commencement of a perpetual holiday: yet the directors of their youth should now excite them by fresh motives, and press upon them the duty of voluntary application, and the responsibility which from henceforth rests upon themselves.

Religion, no doubt, affords the most effectual incentive to the economy of time, and the safest guide to the apportioning of it. For, by religion, we are instructed in the true object of life, and are taught to view the whole of our existence here as a continued discipline. It both points out to us, and enables us to

fulfil, the duties of our station. And whilst it instructs us to judge of all things with a reference to these, it urges us to the pursuit of whatever may qualify us for their performance. Religion teaches us that the end of our present existence is to prepare for one of infinite duration; and thus it affixes to time an incalculable value, and awakens us to a sense of responsibility for its use.

To spiritual exercises, and the pursuit of spiritual knowledge, religion of course assigns primary importance; and as the sense of immeasurable defect must ever accompany our endeavours in these respects, the stimulus to assiduous and strenuous exertion must be perpetual.

But not only does it arouse to the obligation of spiritual attainment, and to the performance of those services which have God for their immediate object, but it apportions to every social obligation its relative claim. It furnishes us with a comparative scale of duties, and according to its standard, should be the prominence assigned to each several employment.

The motives furnished by religion are of

both universal and special application. They urge diligence generally in all matters of serious importance, and they descend to subordinate and minute particulars ; so that, in truth, there is not a moment of which religion does not take cognizance, and for which it does not point out the most fitting occupation ; and it operates in this, as in all other particulars of moral conduct, not so much by individual precepts as by a general principle. The spirit of Christianity is ever active ; it is ever watchful and assiduous : it prescribes, as a universal rule, that we should be “ not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit ; serving ” also “ the Lord.”

Domestic duties furnish an important sphere, and take the lead in social obligations. No extraneous effort atones for the neglect of these. Here we feel that the sex are in their right place ; here they are sure of being useful ; here too, we know them to be influenced, not by motives of display, but by the simple desire of making others happy.

There is no rank which exempts women from these offices, and no situation where some



portion of time must not be devoted to their discharge. Not but that, in many particulars of domestic duty, and especially in the management of a household, many hours may be wasted from want of diligence and method; and we may think ourselves to have been most meritoriously industrious, when five minutes' real assiduity would have achieved the desultory work of a morning. Women not unfrequently fritter away time by this inefficient mode of business; and though they are not unoccupied, do little to any purpose. To establish, therefore, the habit of alertness, of promptly discharging the work of the hour, is an essential part of early discipline, and mainly conduces to subsequent improvement.

Were this habit really attained, many, doubtless, who now excuse themselves from want of time, might find leisure both for intellectual culture and for the labours of active benevolence. The inactivity and indulgence of fashionable life are, sometimes copied by persons who have no pretensions to its elegance. Amongst those whom neither station nor wealth

entitles to an exemption from the homelier occupations of a household, we do not always find the alacrity which conduces so much to domestic arrangement, and turns every hour to good account. We may see, in the younger members of families a disinclination to active employments; a propensity to waste their time on dress, or some elegant trifle, which may be recommended, perhaps, by the example of the higher classes, and may thus tempt their imitation. But the discharge of appropriate duties argues true superiority; and diligence in our station is a far more sure road to respect, than an attempt at pursuits, in which eminence, if desirable, is not likely to be attained without the leisure and appliances of a superior rank, and a taste for which may only excite discontent with a subordinate position.

The leisure which youth may afford should, in all cases, be employed as a preparative for subsequent usefulness; and our choice of occupations should therefore be guided by a reference to our probable condition. The sphere of philanthropy, indeed, is open to all ranks; this



is common ground ; and whilst the exercise of benevolence awakens the rich to sympathy, and realizes to them scenes, of which otherwise they would have no conception, it enlarges the heart and exalts the mind of all ; and unites all in an occupation the most honourable to humanity. In the present day, a thousand channels for benevolent exertion present themselves, a thousand opportunities which young people of every condition may embrace, and by availing themselves of which they may, without infringing any propriety, or attempting any thing for which they are not competent, assist in the great work of doing good to others. Surely such employments are far more satisfactory, and more truly elevating, than the little nothings which often engross interest. Can a young woman hesitate between spending her leisure in what will bring happiness to others, and wasting it upon unprofitable fancies. When the gay Sunday dress, the costume, which by its profusion of ribbon or embroidery is a caricature of fashion and a burlesque on taste, is the result of personal assiduity,—when

this has been purchased by the expenditure of what is infinitely more valuable than gold, does it repay the cost, the sacrifice of time, which might have been improved either to purposes of duty, or of personal benefit, or of kindness to others, or of healthful exercise, or of rest? Would it not be far better to attract less notice by outward decoration, and to be better adorned within,—to be less eager for admiration, and more for improvement,—to be more indifferent to the possession of perishable fascinations, and more intent on the cultivation of intrinsic graces?

There is no doubt that, in many cases, the duty has only to be pointed out, in order to be recognised. The mistake may often arise from ignorance or want of thought; and when the obligation is urged upon the conscience, the heart will answer to the appeal. When an example of assiduity is given by the higher class, it does not lack imitation; and therefore it is peculiarly incumbent on that class to take the lead, to show their sense of the responsibility which belongs to station, and to stimulate others

to co-operate with them in all good works. Such associations have a two-fold advantage. They unite their members in a common interest, and thus inspire mutual esteem; and by proving how beneficially time may be improved, they increase the estimation of its value, and induce a scrupulous regard for its employment. It is matter of congratulation that, in the present day, there are many who, according to their ability, exercise themselves in administering to the relief of those who stand in need, and who thus turn their leisure to its best account,—that, especially in the highest rank, there are amongst us of “honourable women not a few,” who esteem themselves but as stewards of their time, and who, from Christian motives, and with a truly Christian spirit, are assiduous in promoting those undertakings which proceed from the “charity that never faileth.” And happily there are many likewise, of whom the ability is not so great, but from whom the sacrifice is perhaps still greater, who by diligence in their callings earn a little leisure for their own disposal, and grudge not to spend it upon the disinterested labours of benevolence.

It should indeed be a subject of anxious endeavour with all so to bring up children, and to guide youth, that they may feel industry essential to their happiness, — that they may attain that tenderness of conscience which will render them uneasy under the misapplication of time, and solicitous to economise it for purposes worthy its expenditure.

Religion, it has been said, affords the only effectual motives for such economy. Were it not for the stimulus religion applies, and the prospects it affords, there might be a question between present ease and pleasure and the satisfaction arising from virtuous occupation ; but the incentives of Christianity are so urgent, that to those who admit them there is no alternative. The obligation to redeem the time is grounded upon the importance of the works to be achieved, and the greatness of the penalty incurred by the non-performance of them.

So overwhelming, indeed, is the sense of this responsibility to those who are awakened to its importance, that the knowledge of our deficiency

cannot fail to press heavily upon the conscience. The contrast between obligation and performance is so startling, that we must tremble under the conviction of demerit and its just consequences. When we reflect on the pressing nature of claims incurred,—on the paramount urgency of spiritual obligations, and also of duties, moral, domestic, and social, which, according to their respective importance, demand attention,—on the brevity and uncertainty of the period allowed for their discharge; in short, on all that we ought to do, and on the little we accomplish, — we must at once be brought to the confession of our own demerit, and of our need of the ample supply of Gospel grace. Let but a single day be reviewed; the improvement that may have been made in it, the duties performed, the good accomplished, placed at their full value; and on the other hand, the moments wasted, the obligations unfulfilled, be made the counterpoise: and will not conscience strike the balance so much against us, that our appeal can be made only to the bar of unconditional mercy?

But deficiency and unworthiness are the glass in which to view the plenitude of Divine grace. They too are the plea to induce us to accept the proffered gift. If, without considering what we have done wrong, simply on the ground of omission and non-improvement, our hearts condemn us, what have we to do but to avail ourselves of the discharge which the Gospel freely tenders for the burthened conscience, and of the assistance it holds out to those who ask for help?

The arguments for diligence and assiduity lose nothing from being placed on an evangelical basis. These duties rest on the same footing with all Christian obligations, and are essential to Christian proficiency. They are founded on our sense of gratitude; for the price paid for redemption is a perpetual incentive to the efforts of those who feel they have an interest in the blessing procured at such a cost: and they are involved in the obligations for personal holiness, which is the evidence and pledge of individual acceptance. Nor must we forget that the diligent advance in religion

and moral attainment is as conducive to our real happiness in this state, as it is essential as a qualification for the inheritance of the "spirits of the just made perfect."

CHAPTER VII.

STUDY—ITS MODE.

THE term study is not unfrequently misapplied. In reference to our own sex, we are apt to attach to it a pedantic meaning, and to think that when a woman affects to study, she is attempting that, which is out of keeping with her character, and beyond her powers. And we often mistake for study what is undeserving its name, and expect that an imperfect and desultory pursuit of intellectual objects will produce results, which are the reward only of a well-appointed and unremitting application.

Study, in its true acceptance, is essential to all intellectual proficiency; it might be added, that in the higher classes it is essential to moral discipline. For where the training of corporeal toil is wanting, the labour of the mind affords the most effectual check to all those fancies and propensities which may require regulation or

restraint, and it forms habits which are favourable to the exercise of virtue.

By study should be understood that application of mind to intellectual subjects which is prompted by a real love of knowledge, and which calls forth whatever faculties may be most subservient to the attainment of the end immediately in view. Nothing short of this is study. Much, however, passes current for it, which does not imply this mental exercise, and which therefore does not produce such beneficial effects.

The mere act of receiving instruction is often miscalled study. Young persons are said to be studious, if they appear to be employed in learning. Yet they may be at their lessons all the day, and still never study. They may be engaged in their tasks early and late,—may have a master or an occupation for every hour,—may take their exercise by the clock,—and yet never apply their minds really to intellectual attainment. For they may be, in the first place, strangers to the love of knowledge. They may not love knowledge for its own sake. Their application may be prompted by

no desire to arrive at truth,—they may have no real solicitude to investigate the mysteries of nature,—they may even possess no taste to enjoy literary beauty. They may be industrious, perhaps, from habit, or from a compliance with the wishes of their instructors, or from a love of commendation, and they may bring to their work an aptitude to learn; and thus they may be said to be assiduous in their studies: but, if they advance no further, they will be found to have bestowed all their pains to but very little purpose.

For, in such cases, the faculties are only partially exercised. Memory seems chiefly to be brought into play. And thus branches of instruction which, when rightly pursued, are subservient to mental improvement, become, under this system, available to no important end. The study of language, for example, may be very conducive to the strengthening of the mind; but when the only aim is to obtain an aptitude in a foreign dialect, and when this is achieved by almost a mechanical process, it is questionable whether language, thus pursued, is at all effectual to the development and im-

provement of the mental powers. Pupils, on this plan, are scarcely allowed to make an independent effort. They are taught their grammars and their vocabularies; they learn to recite with effect, and to converse in a foreign idiom with fluency; they are made familiar with some of the standard literature of other countries, not as an intellectual pleasure, but as a part of the routine of learning; they are taught to read the books, that they may acquire the language,—they do not acquire the language that they may read the books.

One cannot but suspect that the desire of being reputed an accomplished person is, in part at least, the motive for this sort of instruction. It would seem that in some instances, where young persons have been quite burthened with acquirements, no purpose has been answered but that of giving them a little more *éclat*. They have no relish for literary pursuits; they have no wish to follow up for themselves what has been begun by their teachers; no greater desire to open up the stores with which the keys of their education may have furnished them, than if their only accomplishment had

been the exercise of their needle, their only language their native tongue. They may have some pleasure, perhaps, in the consciousness of having learned so much, and their parents may take a pride in enumerating their acquirements ; but it would be difficult to point out any really useful results achieved by all their instruction. Except, perhaps, speaking French, there is scarcely a practical purpose to which their lessons are subsequently applied.

Amongst persons of an ordinary tone of mind, fashion has even had much influence on the conduct of education. There has been a rage for certain systems or pursuits ; and these have been adopted with the same avidity as a Parisian costume.

The fashion now is to multiply acquirements. It is impossible to learn too much. *Lingomania* is especially prevalent. Frequent visits to the Continent, and intercourse with foreigners (with which fashion also has much to do), afford, no doubt, natural inducements to the study of languages ; and the French nurse and the German master are provided in accordance with the taste of the day.

Without, however, the slightest disparagement of German studies, may it not be questioned whether the proficiency, ordinarily attained in them by female scholars, repays for the time expended, — and even whether the pursuit of German, as it is generally acquired, is likely to be very beneficial to young women of our own country? Why, it may be asked, is this language so much in repute, that a German grammar and dictionary are to be found upon the table of many young women, who seem to have ordinarily no taste for laborious studies, but who consider their education incomplete until they have made some progress in this most difficult tongue? It may be surmised that their acquaintance with it is not very perfect, and that few who attempt, can, after all their pains, do more than speak a few familiar phrases, and warble one of Sontag's songs; for German is no mere dialect. Whatever empiricism may promise to effect in the way of its acquirement, the languages of antiquity present not greater intricacies, or profounder depths, than this most venerable of modern tongues.

But should the language be really mastered, it may still be a question whether the literature of Germany is quite suitable for young women; whether Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, are authors the most calculated to improve their minds, or even to refine their taste. Our female students will scarcely undertake the *philosophy* of our Teutonian neighbours. However familiar they may be with the names of Leibnitz and of Kant, Madame de Stael's digest of German metaphysics will probably satisfy the most ardent disciple of her own sex. Shall we send our young women for their *divinity* to Germany? Divinity, indeed, once brought from that country its best teachers; and to the few rays which first emanated from Erfurt and from Wirtemberg the light of truth owes its revival. But German theology is quite different now; and when it finds its way into the laborious commentary, still more when it insinuates itself into the popular treatise, the sound in faith detect its influence, and feel it their duty to warn against its poison. It, however, has little to captivate the gentle scholar;

and whatever may be the danger of German philosophy or theology to the learned, it is too profound for female heads.

The extraordinary persons who have given so high a name to German literature did not, it may be conjectured, write for women. Their works are for the privileged, for those of their own sex who can understand them, — who can separate the base from the precious, the true from the false; and who, themselves habituated to abstract speculations, can detect meanings which escape the uninitiated, and discriminate the moral or the mischief which may lurk beneath the guise of drama or of fable. The question then may be repeated, whether the ardour with which this language is pursued might not be more profitably spent? It is, there is no doubt, a difficult, and it has not yet been a common study, — and difficulty and rarity are great recommendations; but the old classic tongues would be as unusual and arduous an attainment, and, perhaps, a selection from their stores might be as suitable for the perusal of young women as their more favourite German authors. Lady Jane Grey

probably learned more wisdom from Plato, than our modern ladies would do from most of the philosophers of the Rhine,—could they understand them; and we may question whether even the poets of Greece and Rome are not a safer entertainment than many of the German writers of the sentimental class.

To return, however, to instruction generally. It is not merely with regard to language that any system which does not call forth the reasoning faculties is in fault: in every other branch of knowledge it is generally wrong. History may be read, and, as it were, learned by rote; to make abstracts or extracts of it may be a part of the allotted task, and may register events upon the memory; and the little girl, with her learning fresh upon her, may be more accurately familiar with dates and epochs than the student of half a century: but the end of the information acquired may never be pointed out, nor reflection on it encouraged. The *philosophy* of history may be wholly forgotten. The moral to be learned from past examples may be seldom deduced; the causes or the consequences of events may not be exhibited; and

the profit and pleasure to be derived from the study of character, from tracing the working of general principles, or the development of individual propensities, may never be afforded by the dry and laborious lessons of which the young pupil is the subject.

Of what benefit, it may well be asked, is this newspaper knowledge of the events of preceding ages? Historians, indeed, give their own comments, draw their own deductions, instil their own moral or political sentiments, recommend their own religion or philosophy. But, besides that on these very points the caution is, in many cases, to be given against, and not in favour of the views instilled, it is not by infusing the sentiments of another, but by aiding us in the search of truth, that reading is instructive. To lead the mind to exercise its own powers, reflect on all that is brought before it, inquire into what it does not comprehend, trace out and confirm the truths which sound philosophy teaches, and past experience exemplifies, should be the part of those who are the guides of youth, and who would lead the way to true wisdom.

The same observations are of course applicable to all other branches of instruction. We must, as has been before said, beware of the old error of mistaking the means for the end, and of forgetting that the one may, or may not be subservient to the other. It is the wish of all to render their children by education wiser and better; but some fail just at the most important point, at the last link, — the application; and then all their labour is thrown away.

The system complained of has also another disadvantage, — that it fails in rendering the acquisition of knowledge interesting, and thereby indirectly producing a love of it. Not that young people should be entrapped into learning, or taught to play with their tasks. The ascent to knowledge may be smoothed, but it must still be steep; and if we turn aside to avoid the difficulty, we shall never gain the top. The exercise itself is salutary; and the reward is the more valued, because it is the result of toil.

But although we are assured that there is no easy path to learning, we feel that it is of the utmost importance to render study an occupation in which satisfaction and pleasure may

be found; and this can only be done by judiciously calling into play all the intellectual faculties, and thus imparting to each of them a consciousness of healthful and profitable action. There can be no question that the mere learning by rote is the most irksome and the least refreshing exercise to the mind, especially as the mind itself makes progress. On the contrary, the application of the reason, although not made without greater effort, produces an internal satisfaction, which increases with the experience of it, and fascinates even the youthful student to the labour which it requires. Whilst then we know that memory is essential to learning, and that, as it is the faculty the earliest developed, childhood is the period when it ought to be both strengthened and furnished; yet there can be no greater mistake than to avail ourselves in education of it *exclusively*, and thus to render acquirement a dry and fatiguing task. When learning is associated in the mind with nothing but memorial exercises, — when the recollection of words, events, or terms, appears to be the chief object desired

by the teacher, — when even the beauties of literature are not so much pointed out to the taste, as they are burdened upon the memory, can we wonder that the result is a disinclination from mental application, rather than a relish for it, and a wish to discontinue a course which is so little attractive?

On the contrary, encourage the mind to know its own powers; give it its true elevation; let the young pupil feel that there is something ennobling and improving in study, so that she does not rise from her instruction without gaining some new thought, without the consciousness that her judgment, taste, and reason have been nourished and strengthened, — and she will gain an appetite for intellectual food; she will herself desire it for its own sake, and persevere in seeking it when left to her free choice. The hours of study should leave behind them that same sort of delightful glow which wholesome exercise occasions to the body, — the glow of health and action, resulting from the consciousness of virtuous labour, enhancing the pleasure of

rest, but unattended by fatigue or exhaustion. And it may be added, that whilst application should be earnest while it lasts, it is also most important both that it should not be protracted, and that, when at an end, the relaxation should be equally complete. The young frame should recover its elasticity by the unconstrained play of life and limb; the principle of vitality, which in early years is so strong and buoyant, should have scope; the little girl should be allowed to gambol as nature dictates, without fearing to tear her frock or displace her hair; and the happiness of her free spirit should expand itself without any of the fetters of stiff punctilio. For, oh! short is the period of childish gaiety! The mind too soon becomes anxious, and the brow careworn; and the joyous smile, which in infancy shines forth as a sunbeam, soon contracts a shade of sadness, and the laughing eye a cast of sorrow. Let us, not then forestall the cloud, subtract from the scanty sum of happiness, nor by our own acts prematurely inflict a burden which the course of years must unavoidably

lay on. Do not our hearts respond to the voice of mirth which echoes from the play-room of our children, and betokens life, happiness, and health? And shall we exchange this for the measured movement, and the subdued tone? Shall we be content to substitute for the sportive plays of nature, for the unconstrained movements of the disembarrassed limb, the regulated step and the adjusted position? The dancing lessons, the calisthenic postures, will of themselves do little to promote happiness or health: rather will they be regarded as irksome tasks,—as part of the routine which prescribes relaxation in the same way that it does lessons, and renders the one almost as fatiguing as the other.

No! let the mind really do its work whilst it should be so occupied, and then let it take wing. It will not, if properly disciplined, be slothful even in its hours of refreshment; it will find in nature,—in the exercises of youth,—in some agreeable, though not arduous pursuit, wherewith to enliven, interest, even instruct it; and it will return to its graver occupation with renewed energy and zest. For unless the

animal frame is in healthful action, no mental energy can be expected. Instances may, and do occur, of the spirits rising superior to physical infirmity: but let the invalid student say whether bodily weakness is not the greatest impediment to intellectual effort, and whether even the aspiring flight of genius is not often painfully kept down by the lassitude or irritability of a sickly frame. And if on the early discipline of the mind much of its future tone depends, so the body is affected by its treatment in childhood. Fastidious care, false indulgence, over-anxious nursing must indeed do harm; but whilst these should be avoided, nature should be allowed to expand itself in youth: opportunity should be given for the development of the frame,—for the attainment of that vigour, without which the mind is oppressed by perpetual fetters, and life becomes little better than a gradual decay.

Study is subservient to two important purposes: it furnishes the mind with matter to reflect on, and habituates it to think. But, with reference to these objects, the system al-

luded to is manifestly deficient. It has been before observed, that it is not uncommon for young persons, who have gone through a laborious education, to be still so unaccustomed to apply their learning, that they are devoid of precise and accurate notions upon any important subject. Although they have spent much time in application, it is in vain to endeavour to detect any train of thought which their study may have suggested.

This disinclination from thought may likewise proceed from a consciousness of imperfect attainment. All may not be mastered that may have been professed to have been learned, and thus a sort of self-deceit may have been indulged. But the mind is irritable under the conviction that it has not really arrived at the proficiency it assumes. It is ashamed of the delusion, and dreads not only that *others*, but that *itself* should detect its own deficiency; and therefore it shrinks from examining its actual attainments, and from ascertaining the imperfection it suspects. It has not the moral courage to draw aside the veil.

Inaccurate instruction is, indeed, the enemy of all thought. Its only word is, go on. But rapidity in learning is dearly purchased at the price of accuracy. The application may be less strict, and the result more immediate; but the permanent effect will be prejudicial. And thence the inexpediency of requiring too much from young persons. The temptation to hurry through what ought to be dwelt upon, to slur over or avoid difficulties, is scarcely to be resisted, when progress is computed by the number of acquirements. When the mind in youth has been disciplined, and accustomed to master all that it undertakes, it is easy to add, at almost any period of life, to the stock of information, — and *one* acquirement well attained is a preparation for many others, and often an introduction to them; but, on the contrary, the bad habit of superficial learning, once contracted, tells upon all our after progress, and indisposes to future application. It is indeed a mistake when parents inquire only what their children learn, instead of discovering what they really know, — when they estimate

their proficiency by the number and celebrity of their masters, or by the expensiveness or exclusiveness of their “finishing school.” It is as when we see a house loaded with furniture scrupulously selected for its costliness, but the effect of which is any thing but pleasing, — the eye is not refreshed, neither is the taste gratified. For the harmony, — the mind, if one may so speak, — has been wanting, that, with materials of far inferior value, and at a much less expense, will produce a combination that cannot fail to please, and of which the grace and proportion are grateful to the cultivated sense. Thus it is with education. First-rate masters, highly salaried governesses, schools of undisputed fashion and extravagant expense, may be supposed to afford a pledge for the proficiency of the pupil; but unless they do more than fill the brain with a mass of furniture, — unless the spirit of true wisdom is present to guide, select, and apply, the mind will be like the mansion of which we have been speaking, whose heterogeneous and ill-assorted contents only serve to render more conspicu-

ous the unskilfulness of the hand that brought them together. To educate well, the end should be kept in view, and every effort should tend to it. For, as in optics every thing depends upon the lens, and unless the rays are concentrated by it, the object represented is vague and indistinct ; so, in instruction, — if the various streams of knowledge which we pour in, are not brought to a focus on the intellectual retina, there will be no true pictures traced, no clear ideas conceived ; but the mind will be shrouded in a haze between light and darkness, and the spiritual vision will in vain seek to distinguish the shadowy forms that have been so imperfectly delineated.

Study, in its true sense, as has been already said, involves the *entire* application of the mind. In this consists its difficulty ; this constitutes its labour ; and to an exercise such as this it may not be easy to train the wandering faculties of childhood. But the discipline, although arduous, is satisfactory. Even a child is capable of the pleasure arising from attentive application, and may taste in embryo the de-

lights of that pursuit of knowledge, of which the philosopher is so much enamoured. To induce the habit of concentrating the power of the mind is an achievement worthy the labour of the teacher, and far more deserving the gratitude of the pupil than the communication of any mere matter of information.

CHAPTER VIII.

STUDY — ITS ADVANTAGES.

THE prejudice against the encouragement of study in the female sex arises, probably, from the fear of its detracting from the softness and gentleness of their character. Were this really its tendency, the drawback would be insuperable. But it is not in the nature of knowledge, or of its pursuit, to produce any such result.

It may indeed be urged, that whilst the most profoundly learned are usually the most humble, because they are so aware of their distance from the object at which they aim, that they are never satisfied with their own proficiency ; yet that this is not the case with those of inferior attainment, and that the scanty knowledge which at the most women can ever compass, is just that which is likely to produce vanity and conceit.

Still, it is not the precise degree of information that may be possessed, but the manner in

which study is pursued, which influences the character ; and whatever may be the point of progress, the effect of the discipline necessary to any advance in the road towards true knowledge, is to create self-distrust and humility. Initiate a child for ever so short a distance in the right road,—show her how difficult it is to realize one step,—teach her to compare her progress, not with any thing behind, but with what is before her ; and she will receive a moral lesson every time that she applies to study, and will rise from her books in the spirit of meekness, and with a disposition to disparage her own powers.

It is ignorance which is the mother of conceit. Has the philosopher, by the force of his original genius, or by the patience of his research, discovered some hitherto unknown principle, some hidden property or process which accounts for phenomena deemed inexplicable, or of which the application may achieve or facilitate the most arduous operation : where has he to encounter the most inveterate prejudice, the most bigoted and self-opinionated opposition ? Is it not from the ignorant,—from those who cannot understand him ; who

are too narrow-minded to comprehend his views, and too unacquainted with mental discipline to value their results?

Or, has the enlightened theologian by the influence of the Divine Spirit, by the assiduous and faithful examination of the word of God, discovered, in spite of notions instilled in early youth, of traditions which pretend to the sanction of antiquity, truth which for long may have been obscured, and brought to light principles of pure faith, which had been defaced and overlaid? Where has he ever found the greatest bar to the diffusion of the heavenly knowledge? Where has he met with the most unreasonable attachment to old errors, with the most confident assertion of infallibility? Has it not been amongst those whom ignorance has blinded, who knew nothing of what they either supported or opposed, but with whom prescription was argument, and authority proof?

And, without looking to the notorious examples of former times, ordinary life affords daily proofs that those, who know the least, are

usually the most self-confident. If we wish to correct a mistake, — to persuade to the adoption of an opinion, — to explain a proposed improvement, we expect the greatest difficulty from those of uncultivated minds. To take a familiar illustration, — it is not uncommon for the mistress of a family even to forego the use of an invention calculated to facilitate some domestic process, not because she is not herself aware of the advantage it offers, but because some old servant cannot be put out of her beaten track. And it is the same in all arts. Those who are merely manual labourers, who know nothing of the spirit of science, are the most impracticable in all questions of improvement; and a readiness to learn is always found in an inverse proportion to the deficiency of information.

Why then should there be so much jealousy of imparting knowledge to women? Why should not their minds be so fully disciplined, as to secure at least their proficiency in what they do attempt? Why should they not be trained in the path of true wisdom, and ren-

dered not merely the recipients of a little learning, but the lovers of knowledge and truth.

In society, conversation on ordinary topics, and to a certain point, may be fairly supported by women, whatever be the degree of their intellectual attainment. But subjects of greater interest will arise, and on these differences of opinion be called forth. There can be little question with whom, amongst the sex, discussion is the most agreeable ; who is the most open to conviction, — the freest from prejudice : and on the other hand, who is the most vehement in expression, the most determined partisan, the least disposed to yield a point in candour and good humour. On such as bring to an argument little information, even truth can make slight impression ; and, whether in company or in domestic privacy, a difference of opinion with them is apt to lead to unpleasant dispute. But with a woman of mind it is quite otherwise ; *she*, at least, is tolerant of diversity of sentiment ; she knows that it is no easy matter to arrive at a correct judgment ; she is capable of understanding, and is probably familiar with the

arguments on either side ; and should she be guilty of an occasional display of learning, even this fault is more tolerable than the conceit of those who have no pretensions.

To guard, however, against vanity, let it be the care of the instructors of youth to check the movements of self-applause. Doubtless, there is a danger of a clever girl's experiencing an elation of spirit, when she compares her own advance with that of her companions. Nor is it wise to attempt to deceive her as to her own powers. It is as useless as to endeavour to convince a beautiful child that she is not handsome, when her mirror recalls to her the truth. In both cases, it is better to admit the superiority, but to assign to it no more than its real value. A child, especially of intellectual promise, should be addressed as a reflecting and responsible being. She should be reminded of her relative position, not with regard to others, but to what she herself is to pursue,—of all that she has to learn before she can be said to know any thing,—of all that the really wise have achieved, and of their deep humility. She should be shown, with every step that

she advances, what is still before her ; and whilst she may be conscious of her progress, should be taught to feel that it is nothing extraordinary. Nor should it ever be forgotten, that although intellectual discipline is an important part of education, it is very subordinate to the formation of the moral character, and is indeed chiefly to be attended to as it subserves this end. If the right tone is given, no ill effects need be feared from mental attainment.

The most effectual antidote against conceit will be found in a religious sentiment, — not a mere acknowledgment of Deity, a philosophic veneration for the Almighty Creator, — but a practical faith in the revelation and doctrines of the Gospel. This is the safeguard for the enlightened woman, which will preserve her from all the arrogance of false science, and direct her attainments into the only channel which will prove beneficial to others and to herself. For Christianity sets intellectual, as well as all other human attainments, in their true light, and affixes the character not merely of folly, but of sin, on all self-confidence. The soul, under the influence of religion, is in a state

wholly different from that in which it was when unaffected by it ; and though the evil propensities are repressed, not eradicated, — and pride and vanity, like all other mementos of our fallen nature, are liable to be called forth, yet the curb is laid upon them, and the mind is in some measure restored to its primeval capacity of rightly applying, and not perverting, that which in itself is good.

Study, it has been already said, is a discipline favourable to the exercise of virtue. It predisposes to, as well as assists in, the attainment of moral excellence. Even with reference to religion, studious habits, as a secondary cause, are more conducive than any other to a spiritual frame of mind. This may especially be observed in youth, and amongst young women. Before the innate propensities to evil have gathered strength, whilst the mind is under the plastic influence of education, the very calmness of temperament produced by study affords opportunity for religious questions, and invites to their consideration ; and those, who are accustomed to reflect on every subject, will not pass by points which stand on the very

threshold of inquiry, but will turn in upon themselves, and willingly entertain and prosecute researches which, when made in simplicity and candour, seldom fail to lead to truth. Prejudice has but little sway over the young spirit; the sordidness of the world has not yet contracted, nor infused that selfish policy which, at a later period, often counteracts the honest impressions of the judgment, and checks the better impulses of the heart; and those young people, whose attention is not wasted upon trifles, whose faculties are not debased by an application to unprofitable occupations, are, of all others, the most likely to follow up their convictions, and to apprehend the deep mysteries of faith. Not unfrequently have such been led in the course of their own thoughts so to trace effects to their true causes, and pursue principles to their conclusions, that they have arrived at views far more enlightened and comprehensive than any they have received from human instruction.

If habits of study are thus favourable to the formation of religious principle, they are no less congenial to the Christian temper and to the exercise of Christian graces. It is one of

the excellences of religion, that it opens the mind to the true value of knowledge, and applies it to its most important use. Religion is indeed the true pancrusion, which converts into precious metal all that is susceptible of such a process. And it is easy so see how intellectual and moral discipline have a mutual influence on the understanding and the heart; for if, as has been already remarked, intellectual culture is often conducive to moral improvement, so, on the other hand, the reception of religious truth (unless there is some counter-acting influence) expands the mind, and leads it to exert itself in profitable studies. A young woman, if a serious Christian, sees at once that the cultivation of her understanding is a religious duty,—that the faculties of her mind are amongst the most valuable talents for which she is responsible, — that the improvement of them is especially calculated to increase her power of doing good,—and that the attainment of knowledge in all its branches is a pursuit than which there is scarcely any higher, and which is on every account worthy her attention; and therefore she is to enrich her understanding, to

strengthen her reason, and to improve her mind, and by so doing she will be herself an able supporter of the truth, and will be in little danger of being led away from it by any cunningly devised system.

There may, indeed, be some who, from a deep sense of the all-engrossing importance of *one* object, are jealous of any thing which seems to divert the mind in the slightest degree from its immediate pursuit; but is not, in truth, that object pursued, when we are seeking what elevates the soul, and reveals to the pious mind, at every step of its progress, more of the excellence of Christian virtue, and above all of the Divine perfections? It would be endless to show how every path of true knowledge leads to the Author of all Truth; how clearly the believer traces the providence, wisdom, and love of God in every inquiry into His natural or moral government; how, from all the workings of the human understanding,—the various developments of character,—from the discoveries of philosophy,—from even the errors of the ignorant, or the conceits or sophisms of the falsely learned, lessons of heavenly wis-

dom may be drawn, which at once display the infinite excellence of the Revelation which Divine mercy has vouchsafed, and furnish the most persuasive arguments for its belief. Nor must we overlook the collateral benefits derived from intellectual culture,—the influence it gives the Christian,—the manner in which it lessens or removes prejudice, and the accuracy that it imparts to the judgment. In the scale of Christian obligation there are *direct* duties, religious and social, which, as has been remarked, have the first claim upon us, and are to be first considered; but there may be found, especially in youth, an abundance of leisure, which, if not improved in mental culture, will be assuredly either trifled away or misspent. There is a restless activity in the mind of youth, which must find some employment: give it a right direction, occupy it by wholesome exercise, and it will be an efficient impulse leading on to improvement; but neglect thus to afford it matter on which to spend itself, and it will sprout out in some branch of unseemly growth, which the hand of the pruner must excise. Can we really imagine that it

is better to dream away youth and life, than to improve them to the attainment of knowledge,—that there is less danger in doing nothing, than in intellectual pursuits,—or that the serious trifles which are sometimes had recourse to, for the sake of occupying leisure and diversifying employment, are a more legitimate and worthy occupation, than the culture of those faculties which are the distinction of our species, and which we look forward to as being perfected in that state for which *this* is an education? Every intelligent Christian, woman as well as man, of a well-ordered, well-instructed mind, is an accession to the Christian name: we feel that she has *that* within her which will secure her from the narrowness of party spirit, or from the mistakes of a misdirected judgment; that she is qualified to act her part with wisdom and sober-mindedness, as well as with honesty and zeal; and that she is better able to fulfil every duty,—to co-operate in every philanthropic effort,—to occupy her station in society,—to instruct, persuade, please,—than any who are inferior to her in intellectual proficiency.

Let us not then fear to encourage in our young women a taste for *study*; but let it be rather our care so accurately to store their minds with the elements of knowledge, that they may feel the value of what they have already learned, and may desire to pursue the path they have entered, to the utmost limit of their capability. At the same time, by the infusion of principles which humble whilst they elevate the soul, and which, by establishing the pre-eminent claims of Heaven as the first object of desire and pursuit, damp all undue ardour for the attainment of any thing earthly, let us teach them, that to however high a point mental improvement may be carried, it should be valued chiefly as conducive to that excellence which should be the constant aim and the main purpose of the heaven-born spirit.

In the preceding remarks on study no pursuits have been particularly urged, — the object having been, rather to suggest a few practical hints on the general mode and advantages

of application, than to point out what *individual* judgment can better ascertain.

There are few branches of knowledge which may not be applied to a useful purpose, and which do not at least involve in their attainment that exercise of mind which is so beneficial to the pupil; and as there are many that in themselves are equally important and interesting, should we not, in their selection, consult the indications given by young people themselves? It is surely wiser to comply with the bent of the pupil, than to run the risk of thwarting a natural taste, for the sake of forcing one which may never be imparted.

There have occurred instances where the mind has appeared disinclined to all effort, until its peculiar bias has manifested itself, and has acted as a stimulus to the slumbering faculties; and if we observe the relative facility with which young people acquire, or the zest with which they apply to their different branches of instruction, we shall discover in most instances that nature has pointed out certain lines in which there is greater probability than in others of attaining to excellence.

There may be a hesitation in allowing this, or a doubt as to the expediency of consulting the natural preference, and some may feel disposed to educate on a contrary principle. They would, for instance, prescribe Euclid to the imaginative, and endeavour to excite the fancy of the more sober pupil by a course of poetry and elegant literature. But although some counterpoise may be necessary to preserve a right balance, mediocrity — not excellence — is the probable result of a counteracting system; and the fact that first-rate minds almost invariably choose for themselves some one object, — and by diligently pursuing *that*, attain to superiority, — proves, that the use and concentration of willing energies are far more likely to produce proficiency, than a coerced application of faculties indisposed to their task. In respect, indeed, to all propensities, intellectual or moral, which are capable of being improved to a good and useful purpose, it is the business of education to discipline, but not to counteract.

Let it not, however, be supposed by these remarks, that all our young ladies are to be made *learned* women. The extent of acquire-

ment should be determined by the capacity, taste, station, and leisure of the pupil. Still, whatever may be the degree of knowledge, early habits of application are equally important. If these are contracted, the progress, to whatever point limited, will be complete, and the effect upon the character beneficial. And it may reasonably be hoped, that young women, thus trained, will be more humble, feminine, and teachable, than those whose education has been more imperfect, or whose faculties have been employed chiefly upon trifling matters.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.

FEMALE IMPROVEMENT.

BY

MRS. JOHN SANDFORD,

AUTHOR OF

“WOMAN IN HER SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC CHARACTER.”

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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ERRATUM.

**The numbers of the Chapters in this Volume are misprinted :
Chapter VIII. should have been Chapter IX., and so on
progressively.**

FEMALE IMPROVEMENT.

CHAPTER VIII.

ACCOMPLISHMENT.

THE term accomplishment admits of an extensive meaning. By an accomplished person may be implied one well versed in intellectual, as well as elegant attainments,—qualified by natural and acquired endowments to adorn an elevated social station,—and so raised above the ordinary level as to afford a sample of a finished state of culture, and to represent the best tone of mind and manners which the age can realise. We may be allowed, however, to understand accomplishment in its more restricted sense, and to express by it a proficiency in such arts as embellish the character, and

improve and refine the taste; but which, although contributing to general grace and agreeableness, are not absolutely essential to mental improvement, or indispensable to moral discipline. In short, by accomplishment may be intended the ornamental branches of education, which some cultivate almost exclusively, and which a few as exclusively decry and reject; and of which, whilst the inordinate pursuit cannot be justified, it may, we hope, be shown that the tendency is to render us more amiable, to increase our own capacity of allowed enjoyment, and to enable us to contribute more frequently and effectually to that of others.

To understand the value of accomplishments, and also to regulate our cultivation of them, we must clearly perceive, and bear in mind their legitimate object. The undue depreciation, or the abuse, proceeds from the losing sight of this. The utilitarian, who forgets how much refinement of taste may conduce to happiness and virtue, contemns all that relates to the mere polish of the mind. On the other hand, the worldly and the frivolous, who care only for selfish pleasure or distinction, esteem and

cultivate accomplishments only with a view to personal gratification. But let us regard them as subservient to the improvement of character, and to the power of pleasing and even benefiting others, and we shall neither think them unworthy attainment, nor be in danger of pursuing them to excess. We shall seek proficiency, — because, without proficiency, we can scarcely realise the object we ought to have in view : we shall seek it, with enthusiasm of purpose, — because, without enthusiasm of purpose, we can never, in anything, attain excellence ; but still we shall assign to accomplishment only a subordinate place, and shall allow it to interfere neither with necessary business, nor with important duty.

Accomplishments may be cultivated from vanity, or from the desire of exciting the admiration of the other sex. Where either of these is the stimulus, the pursuit of accomplishment often becomes immoderate ; and its attainment is accompanied with much that is displeasing in the character, and unprepossessing in the outward deportment. The young person who, after much pains and practice, thinks she has

realised the cadence of a Pasta,—who, to render the imitation more complete, has copied, not merely the inflexion of the voice, but the very braiding of the hair, and the motion of the eye,—and who has been prompted to her laborious achievement by the prospect of attaining the *ne plus ultra* of amateur celebrity, will doubtless be rewarded by her *succès de société*, and will merit at least the ovation, though the highest crown be awarded to the professional performer. Her exhibitions will, however, excite little real pleasure in her hearers; a few may be gratified by her proficiency in art, and may bear with her affectation for the sake of her skill; others may envy her talent, and grudge the admiration she receives: but, in the very hour of her triumph, the sensation she excites will be of a questionable nature; and the incense that is offered her, will partake more of the adulation of flattery, than of the tribute of disinterested praise. She has herself no genuine relish for her art; neither is hers that amiable ambition that prefers giving pleasure, to calling forth applause. Take her from the private orchestra,—

from the excitement of the assembly and concert room,—and she will scarcely deem it worth her while to amuse; she will have a cold, or a head-ache, and will require the homage of a crowd to call forth her powers of entertainment.

This is wholly mistaking the true object of accomplishment; and we cannot wonder, that, whenever the result is, in any degree, such as has been described, it should raise a question as to the expediency of cultivating what appears to be used only for the purposes of display. But if there is nothing in the *nature* of accomplishment to produce this desire for exhibition; if its intrinsic tendency is neither to debase, nor to enervate, but to refresh and refine the mind; if, instead of rendering young persons more greedy of admiration, it may be the means of making them more independent of any foreign stimulus, more domestic in their habits, and more quiet in their tastes,—not only may the objections be obviated which the abuse or perversion of accomplishment suggests, but it will be allowed that, under proper restrictions, art

may be a useful, as well as graceful addition to more important attainments.

Scruples are sometimes entertained as to the propriety of expending time on what partakes so much of the nature of ornament. It is urged that leisure is so valuable, and that the claims of duty and of higher pursuits are so pressing, that no unnecessary occupation should be allowed to engross any portion of hours, which are quite too short for the achievement of the most important ends. In reply to this objection, accomplishment may be justified on the ground of our acknowledged need of refreshment, and of its affording an agreeable relaxation from grave business and serious application. We may also consider that the mere fact of our devoting *time* to valuable objects does not, *of necessity*, involve our improvement in them. The mind, perpetually exercised in a circle, within which nothing extraneous is admitted, may yet never put forth its energies, and in spite of its systematic labour, may make no advance proportionate to its apparent effort. And it is the same in matters of practical duty ; a continual occupa-

tion in one line, a scrupulous rejection of whatever seems to interfere with it, may yet accomplish a result inferior to what will be achieved by moving in a less restricted sphere. Without, then, in the slightest degree forgetting the importance of application, let us also remember, that we are not to calculate on our making progress, or attaining to proficiency, in any thing, merely by the time or pains we expend upon it, but by the actual *power* which we bring to bear.

In education, as in all other pursuits, we are perpetually reminded of this fact. When the intellectual faculties are in vigorous action, we may accomplish in an hour, what would otherwise be the work of a whole day. And therefore, with respect to mental discipline, the object in early life should be to infuse, if possible, a healthful tone, to habituate to effective exertion, and to strengthen every power which may be turned to profitable account. To this end, *diversity* of occupation is needful; and accomplishment might be cultivated, were it only with a view to afford it. Nothing indeed gives a more complete change to the severer application of the reflec-

tive faculties than the culture of art ; and in intellectual as in physical action, an alternation of the powers brought into exercise relieves, as much as entire rest. But accomplishment may have even a more direct effect in promoting intellectual health; and as a subsidiary part of the discipline, it may materially *contribute* to that mental temperament which implies *power*. For the study of art calls forth faculties of a new order, extends the range of observation and of thought, and, in short, may conduce to that finished state of culture which puts us in possession of our best faculties, and brings these to the highest pitch of their capability.

At the same time it is essential that the cultivation of lighter attainments should be pursued so far only as it may really tend to this end.

The objections to accomplishment, as has been remarked, gather weight, if they do not wholly arise, from the ill consequences of excess. When persons of serious thought see, in examples around them, the most valuable part of early life almost wholly devoted to ornamental attainments, — some four or five hours of each day absorbed in music, — another portion of time appro-

priated to drawing,—and a third to dancing,—they cannot but be concerned at the misapplication of time, and the waste of the best energies ; and they are perhaps tempted to run into the contrary extreme, to expunge all that may partake of decoration from the discipline which they prescribe,—and to banish from their school-rooms the piano-forte and the easel, as strictly as they would any mere stimulus to vanity, or incentive to worldly tempers and pursuits. Or when they see young persons,—who, from their station in society, their habits and manners, are qualified to fill only a subordinate rank,—devote the hours which ought to be spent in more homely employments,—in working for their families, in superintending or assisting in domestic occupations, perhaps in the business of the farm or of the shop, — disdaining these necessary and respectable labours, for the sake of attaining to an indifferent degree of skill, in what is to them an unsuitable accomplishment,—they are disposed perhaps to feel disgust altogether at the cultivation of art, and to throw their influence and example wholly into the scale against it.

Accomplishment, unless it is the ornament of

a cultivated mind, is like a fine dress upon a vulgar person: it renders more conspicuous what it is intended to conceal, and disfigures rather than beautifies. Accomplishment is a graceful addition when the groundwork is complete; but it is no substitute for the essential branches of education, no apology or cloak for imperfect knowledge. Accomplishment is the polish; but the gem that is not precious is not susceptible of lustre: it is the touch of the master; but where the outline has no merit, the added strokes of the proficient are unsuitable and incongruous.

Still we would say, let not accomplishment be decried, because we may deprecate the vanity that would make it a first object, or lament the folly that would attempt to graft the exotic on an uncongenial stock. Accomplishment is not pleaded for on the ground of its being essential; on the contrary, every ornamental attainment should be regarded as a matter, not of obligation, but of taste. To attempt to create an ear, or a voice, is an effort which will never repay our pains. Where the spark of genius is wanting, it is in vain that we attempt to kindle it.



This often appears where accomplishments are deemed indispensable to a certain style of education, or where the culture of one particular art is so insisted on, that even a natural disinclination to it is not admitted as an apology for its discontinuance. In the former case, where all the daughters of a family are, as a matter of course, initiated, at a certain age, in music and drawing, and a portion of each day is devoted to their practice, the result often proves that the time thus spent has been little better than wasted. For, the mere mediocrity that is the probable result, and the slight use that is subsequently made of such accomplishments, are a very inadequate return for the hours spent in their pursuit. And in the other instance, where effort is made to force a love of a peculiar art, and the reward of much endeavour is mere mechanical execution, the gifted Pandora will be an automaton still, and in spite of her dexterity, will display none of the inspiration of genius, nor of the expression of taste.

The charge of misapplication of time must in such instances, indeed, be allowed; still the

general question is not affected by these exceptions. If accomplishment be a desirable addition to other more important attainments, it were surely advisable to try the taste with regard to them, and to encourage the pursuit of them so far as may contribute to improvement and general agreeableness. And in childhood, when the formation of habits of application is of even more importance than actual acquirement, the daily occupation of an hour or two need not be grudged in an endeavour to discover in art, as in study, the bent of our pupils. The indication may be given without any assistance on our parts; and, in such instances, we shall scarcely hesitate to comply with it. But without so decided a suggestion on the part of nature, it is only fair that an opportunity should be afforded for the developement of a latent talent, and, if it exists, the time necessary for its cultivation will not be expended without return. The prosecution of a single accomplishment under these circumstances, with application, assiduity, and adequate instruction, will secure a proficiency

in it, and will at the same time invigorate the mind, and involve collateral benefits by no means inconsiderable.

It may, however, be argued that accomplishments, although they contribute to elegance, are yet apt to produce frivolity of mind; and that they are essentially trivial, and unsuitable to persons of reflection. Fancy and fashion, it is true, have sanctioned employments which are little better than expedients for getting rid of time; and though these might be excused as amusements, they are not worthy attention as serious pursuits. Yet such trifles sometimes are admitted where higher accomplishments are proscribed, and a young woman may spend her hours on making useless ornaments, who is not allowed to cultivate a relish for the fine arts.

The distaff and needle are held to be the province of woman. They have been rendered venerable by classical association, and are at once the resource and pride of the sex. They are connected with recollections of Andromache and Lucretia; and we owe them a debt of gratitude, were it only for cheering the captive Mary, and for beguiling the lonesome hours of many a

cloistered recluse. Nor can we look at the ancestral achievements of the needle, the heir-looms of female industry, without feeling a respect for that pains-taking assiduity, which puts to shame our own more desultory efforts. The curiously wrought chair, the grotesque tapestry, are identified with the traditional image of our grandmothers; and as we look at the posthumous relics of their art, we associate with these the severe virtues and domestic habits of a pristine school.

But, in spite of our historic reverence for the mosaic of tent-stitch, may we not suggest a doubt as to the utility of some of those little accomplishments which have been successively in vogue in modern times. The apparatus for shoe-making is, we believe, obsolete, yet ingenuity is ever at work to devise some pretty nothing as an apology for idleness. Of these ephemeral inventions, it can scarcely be alleged, that they are calculated to soothe and tranquillize, like the soberising industry of the olden time: their character is more exciting; they must be recommended by novelty and effect; if once made common, they lose their attrac-

tion, and the work of last year, like the chintz of last spring, is thrown aside as hackneyed and unfashionable.

Whilst, then, we bestow on these ingenious arts their meed of praise, it cannot but be admitted that they incur the charge of frivolity more than accomplishments of a higher order. The table, which daily exhibits nothing but materials for fancy manufactures, is apt to create a suspicion as to the tone of mind of its fair owner, and to convey the impression that she is more occupied with the ornamental than with the really important. With reference, indeed, to accomplishment generally, it is mediocrity in attainment which strikes us as trifling. The charge cannot be admitted against art in its highest departments. The pursuits that, in their most exalted spheres, have been rendered illustrious by Raphael and by Handel, must not be undervalued because their inferior walks are crowded with inferior practitioners, — nor must we confound the attempts of the latter with the achievements of original genius, or the attainments of cultivated talent.

To estimate accomplishment, we should con-

sider both its effect on character and its intrinsic worth. Accomplishment, when generally cultivated, indicates an advanced state of civilisation. The progress and diffusion of the arts mark the degree of intellectual refinement; and will be felt by the polish which they have imparted to the age. On this account, their effect on the *female* character is advantageous; for all that tends to promote gentleness and sweetness in woman renders her more amiable, and contributes to that winning grace, which is the secret of her social attraction.

It might almost be said that the sex *need* such a discipline. An intellectual woman, who has trained her mind in the severer studies, generally requires the softening effect of the fine arts, to give not only grace, but feeling and sentiment to her character. And, in the same way, one who may not possess equal mental powers, but who is gifted with other valuable endowments, and spends her time in useful occupations, will still be more gentle and pleasing, if she does not disdain the culture of some ornamental talent.

There seems, indeed, something harsh and

unfeminine in a contempt of the elegant arts. Persons who look down upon accomplishment, are apt to entertain a high idea of their own standard, and to exercise a censorious spirit towards all who in any degree differ from it. Yet, surely, the culture of what is graceful, when it does not supersede, or in the least degree interfere with important obligations, tends to adorn the highest excellence. Music has a peculiar faculty of giving softness to the heart and feelings. The real lover of music cannot listen to a strain of sweet and heaven-born sounds, — cannot herself indulge in the performance of the melody she loves, without being conscious of its happy power. She feels the soothing influence steal upon her soul, and forgets the irritation or the annoyance of the passing hour ; and she rises from her instrument with a cheerfulness of spirit and benevolence of temper which at once dispose and capacitate her to please. And we believe that drawing has a similar effect : at least it composes the mind ; it awakens it to a perception of the beautiful, and by leading it to contem-

plate what is lovely, it withdraws it from dwelling upon what is disappointing and vexatious. Accomplishments, indeed, like poetry, impart a delicacy of tone, which, though clearly evident as a result, is transfused by an almost imperceptible process into the character. We can scarcely tell how the arts attain this end, — whether by the peculiar nature of the pleasure they excite, or by the taste which they generate and improve, or by the abstraction of thought from what is vulgar which they occasion. But in whatever way they operate, we cannot but allow that their tendency is such as has been stated; and we feel that the faculties given us for their culture are intended as so many channels by which gentle emotions should enter our hearts, and refinement be communicated to mind and manner.

Elegance of mind, it will be allowed, is a recommendation to any woman. This may exist without accomplishment; it may be a gift of nature, or imparted by intellectual culture, or even by association with others. But accomplishment *tends* to produce it; and by

bringing us into contact with what is in itself so graceful, may be the means of communicating grace to us.

Accomplishment, however, may be placed upon higher ground; if we consider it as the means of bringing us under the influence of the poetry of the arts, and leading us to value all that is sublime and beautiful in them. The emotions exerted by the chefs d'œuvre of genius are amongst our most elevated feelings, and seem, as it were, a part of our higher nature; and yet to experience these, or at least to feel them in their full force, we must possess and cultivate the taste which enables us to discern excellence in art, and to understand its power.

It is not the vulgar and unpractised that are capable of feeling what Corregio has painted, or Handel has composed. Not only can they not appreciate the perfection of the art — in the one case, the delicacy and richness of the colouring, or in the other, the harmony of the counterpoint — but they are not susceptible of the sentiment which, in minds of higher mould, is called forth by every exhibition of what is beautiful in nature, or lofty

in idea. At least, the pleasure they may experience is that of sense,—it is the gratification of the eye or ear; it is not that intellectual enthusiasm which the embodying of sublime conceptions calls forth in persons of chaste and cultivated taste:

Illusory as may be the feeling, considered as a religious impression, which the arts when elevated to devotional purposes may excite, we need surely not entertain so scrupulous a jealousy of their influence, as to deny to them the power of aiding to call forth or foster the aspirations of the pious mind. When we listen to the heart-inspiring strain, which, when poured forth from the assembly of Christian worshippers, seems to realize on earth the music of the celestial choir; or when, through the cloistered aisle, the peal of the mighty diapason swells upon our ear; or when the imposing grandeur of Handel's sacred song, or the flow of Mozart's solemn harmony strikes the chord of mystic sympathy within our breasts, — are we not removed for a season from the world of sense? do we not, as it were, catch the sounds of the harps of heaven? is not the spirit of devotion stirred within us, and its flame fanned within our souls? Or, when we

look at the ideal form of the man of sorrow, as shadowed forth by the pencil of the immortal artist, — when we contemplate the majesty* of his agonized person, which the touch of devotion has pourtrayed, — when in the delineation of even his youthful image† we trace the lines of unsearchable wisdom, and read the deep workings of his Almighty mind, do we not feel such a realization of His presence as brings us, as it were, into contact with incarnate Deity—as recalls to us the scenes of Galilee and Calvary, and conveys to our immediate apprehension the sublimest mysteries of faith? There is surely nothing of this which savours of superstition, — no approach to an earthly or carnal sentiment. There can be no danger that the enlightened Protestant, who, to the spiritual object of adoration, thinks not of rendering other than a spiritual service, should be arrested in approach to the Eternal and Invisible by a mere object of sense, or, for a moment, should confound the material and perishable with the immaterial and Divine. No! we may safely

* Corregio's *Ecce Homo*.

† Leonardo da Vinci's *Christ among the Doctors*.

allow the influence, and welcome the few ennobling impressions of which we are susceptible. And more — with hearts which are ever prone to decline towards this world, with minds which are perpetually intruded on by thoughts of petty or selfish interest, gladly should we avail ourselves of all that may tend to excite in us, if it be only a transient elevation; gladly should we foster the enthusiasm which lights up holy desires, and cherish the ethereal flame which seeks the atmosphere of a purer sky. We may not question that to experience, or even understand such feelings, refinement and elevation of taste are essential. All intellectual pleasure is, to a certain degree, exclusive; it has little attractions for inferior minds. And all those delicate susceptibilities which are the organs of pleasure, and it may be occasionally of pain, to persons who have cherished and improved them, are as an unknown sense to those who have never called them forth.

Should we not then deem it incumbent on us to impart and improve a capacity, which is a channel of conveying, not merely agreeable, but sublime impressions? And ought we to shut out

from young people what may be a means of even their moral improvement? It may be said, that the latter is *not* the constant effect of the culture of the fine arts; yet, will it not be found that, in cases where a contrary result has appeared to be its consequence, this is attributable not to the pursuit itself, but to adventitious circumstances attendant on it?

Nothing conveys a more unfavourable impression than harshness in one who ought to be of softer mould. The woman who can indulge in an unkind expression, or an ungentle word,—who, under apology of bluntness or colour of honesty, will wantonly wound the sensitive or self-distrustful,—who, at the expense of another's pain, will indulge her own captiousness and caprice, may claim merit for her plain speaking, but affords an unamiable specimen of the sincerity on which she prides herself. Anxious therefore should we be to communicate, in early life, true delicacy of sentiment; to encourage susceptibilities which are not selfish; to smooth the roughness which may disfigure even sterling worth; and to communicate that polish which

is beautiful in idea or art, we are equally moved, though in a different measure, by the same influence,—we understand the same language,—we are capable of the same sentiment. And the consciousness of this is elevating. “*Ed io anche son pittore.*” * A painter indeed I may not be,—a musician I may not be,—a poet I may not be ; but if I am a lover of art, —if I but respond to its appeal,—if but a drop of the ethereal ichor circulate within me, I feel that I have something in common with the high line of genius,—that I am united to the intellectual and the spiritual,—that I possess an independence of mind and a superiority of taste, of which neither debasing cares, nor sordid interest, nor the absence of sympathy in others can despoil me.

There is little danger of the poetic sentiment being carried to excess. In superior minds we may believe that good sense, and, above all, principle, will keep within limits the enthusiasm of talent ; and we cannot but think that to awaken tastes which unite us with intellect and

* Corregio.

genius, and detach us from sense and selfish interests, is a desirable end in education, and will conduce to the improvement of the moral tone.

Undoubtedly, it is the few alone who possess the *creative* energy of genius; it is the few alone who "feel the power within them burn." There is a faculty,—a gift innate and arbitrary,—an influence almost independent of the will, that masters those who are its subjects, and calls up to their exalted and fervid imaginations forms that breathe, and thoughts that burn. The power that to the entranced mind of the painter presents that divine shape which ordinary imagination dares not to conceive, and so embodies the sublime idea that he traces its lineaments as if it were an object present to his sense,—the power that to the sculptor moulds the images of symmetry and grace, and causes the "bright work to grow beneath his hand *," and "his thought, heart, soul, to burn, to shine,"

"Thro' the pale marble's veins;"

the power that to the ear of the dying master †

* Hemans.

† Mozart.

awoke a strain of glowing harmony, so that he chanted forth his own sad requiem — that power is one that listens not to the call and bends not to the control of human endeavour, but is an exclusive and individual property, the consciousness of possessing which is itself stimulating and transporting.

“ Yet once again
I greet it proudly, with its rushing train
Of glorious images ; they throng — they press —
A sudden joy lights up my loneliness.”*

Where such a power indicates its presence, it is impatient of restraint; it challenges the culture necessary for its development, and often, by its spontaneous effort, seeks and obtains for itself those means of improvement which may be by others kept back or reluctantly accorded. It is not to the rare possessors of these unusual gifts that common rules apply; and it is not, of course, with reference to such instances that these remarks are made. The culture which individual talent may authorise can be determined only by the special indication of its

* Hemans.

nature and degree, and is a question quite distinct from the encouragement of accomplishment as an ordinary pursuit. But there are few, especially among women, who are not capable of the feeling which art excites; and it is upon this ground that the argument in its favour rests. It is because accomplishment is a means of eliciting generous sentiment,—of giving expansion and delicacy to our tastes,—of producing, in short, the same end as the study of polite literature, or other graceful and classic exercises,—that its cultivation is desirable; and if these objects are not advanced by our pursuit of it, its best recommendation is lost sight of, and we fail in attaining the only *important* benefit which it is calculated to produce.

Considering accomplishments in this light, we may understand how ineffectual and profitless is a merely mechanical practice of them. In music, the power of playing a few pieces, or even the attainment of the most accurate and brilliant execution, by no means involves any sympathy in the spirit of the art. There is a style of performance, as well as of composition, which seems to be without *mind*;

which indicates an acquaintance with an instrument, but nothing more. The study of the theory of the art will doubtless more effectually convey its sentiment as it necessarily brings us acquainted with the works of the best masters, and teaches us to understand their chief merits. We can scarcely analyse the masterly studies of Beethoven, — the rich though startling combinations of Weber ; or, to refer to an earlier date, follow the liquid successions of Corelli, or the majestic harmonies of Pergolesi and of Graun, and not feel the magic of their notes, and respond to the chord which they have power to awaken. The mere legerdemain of a rapid movement, the *saltatory* agility, which some of our fashionable masters delight to require at our hands, and which, however gracefully achieved, often mar the subject they seem to embellish, — the manual dexterity which is now essential to a finished performer, may be realized, without our being in any degree alive to the pathos of music. But it is scarcely possible to enter the higher walks of the art, — to be initiated into the laws of counterpoint, — to glance into that science of

harmony which discloses such unknown sympathies, and surprises us with unisons and chords which are among the mystic secrets of nature, and not be aroused to the feeling, which itself is the echo of an accordant note within us, and the answer of the immaterial spirit to the external appeal.

It might be also urged that the arts, studied as science, are an intellectual exercise, requiring a close application, and no ordinary degree of clearness of mind. Many of our fair proficient in the practice of music and painting have little idea that their theories involve the higher branches of mathematical science. Without however pursuing them so far, an acquaintance with even the elements of either, requires an attention which is greater than is demanded by the generality of female studies, and which effectually redeems them from being regarded in the light of frivolous pursuits; and those who are disposed thus to render themselves proficient in either accomplishment, will enjoy the conscious satisfaction with which a thorough mastery of what we learn rewards us. They will also be more susceptible of the highest en-

joyment of the art, and will be so much the less likely to use their talent as a matter of display; since those who are conscious of real attainment are always less anxious for the applause of others, than the showy and the superficial.

Accomplishments are not to be estimated merely as solitary pursuits: they have their social and domestic value; and their claims in this respect can scarcely be disallowed. They often form a ground of sympathy between persons casually thrown together, who have otherwise little that is congenial; and they furnish topics of conversation, or sources of mutual entertainment, when, without them, conversation might be commonplace, and society dull.

There are occasions when none of us may be sorry to avail ourselves of such a resource. It may happen, that we are thrown amongst those with whom we are not at all united in heart, and this in circumstances when the introduction of more interesting matters might be inappropriate. In such cases, do not the fine arts afford a subject which we may pleasantly discuss? and do they not thus often throw down a barrier of reserve, and even pave the way for an

influence which it may be most important to establish? They are, at least, a topic superior to the gossip, the fashions, or the climate of the day: they call forth intellect and taste; they lead us at once on classic ground; and they may be the means of our learning much that is instructive from others, to whom we, in our turn, may impart what is still more valuable. It has been remarked that there is no talent which a Christian may possess which may not be improved to the best end; and there is no degree of it which Christian graces may not adorn. It is, indeed, the Christian spirit which renders amiable every development of genius, which teaches us to use it as a means of promoting affection and good-will, and which disposes us to avail ourselves of all that we have, to promote the happiness of others.

The cultivation of whatever may render the domestic circle more attractive is peculiarly deserving the attention of women. The agreeableness of a family party in great measure depends on the young female members of it. If, in them, there are the disposition to oblige, and the

power to gratify and entertain, home will afford attractions to which few will be insensible. An evening, enlivened by intellectual or elegant pursuits, leaves a pleasant impression, and disposes us to seek its frequent recurrence. And talent thus employed, for purposes of social and domestic kindness, — to gratify a parent, to refresh a husband after a day's anxiety or toil, or to amuse a brother, and keep him within the precincts of his own home, — is often found a valuable auxiliary to other more important means of influence.

It is peculiarly incumbent on those who are thus endowed with powers of entertainment to avail themselves of them for purposes of kindness. The readiness to oblige, on occasions where display cannot be the motive, is a test of real amiability; and should be the invariable result of Christian principle. It is painful to observe any deficiency in this exercise of genuine courtesy. A little effort made to please another, — be it only in the way of gratifying taste, or of enlivening a tedious hour, — is as much an act of benevolence, and may flow from as high and disinterested a feeling, as many more im-

portant labours of philanthropy. On the contrary, the absence of slight attentions is but poorly compensated by occasional exertions of superior moment, however great the sacrifice they may require.

The contrast, not unfrequently presented by different family circles, where the degree of talent possessed by their several members is pretty nearly equal, is striking and instructive. In some, the attainments of each are brought into a common treasury, and are made available for the benefit and pleasure of all. In others, every thing is regarded as an exclusive property, or a solitary enjoyment; and individuality is so much the ruling principle, that any attempt at mutual participation is but coldly welcomed. And the results are equally different. In the one case are found cheerfulness, urbanity, family love, — happy evenings, domestic habits, and a relish for sober and intellectual pleasures. In the other, a want of sympathy, an unconcern for others, — ennui. One retires to her room, another sleeps in a corner, a third seeks abroad a relief from the dulness of home. If the fair musician, whose

practice, perhaps, has often disturbed her brother's morning studies, — whose reiterated cadences may have rung in his ears, and tried his temper, — would, in the evening, recollect that she *had* a voice, she might possibly make some amends for ideas she may have chased away, and trains of thought she may have interrupted. But, in the evening, she is tired or hoarse, — and, in short, it is far from her thoughts to bestow the fruit of her industry on those with whom she daily associates. She reserves it for the stranger, whose claim upon her attention is, of course, in proportion to the recentness of their acquaintance.

Yet, if there are occasions when accomplishment is unquestionably available to a good purpose, it is, as has been said, when it is employed to promote domestic union and love ; when it renders the different members of a family so agreeable, and almost so necessary to each other, as to cement the natural bond that knits them together. We would repeat that this, as an end, cannot too sedulously be inculcated, — that, whilst talent is cultivated, the obligation should be pressed on young

people, that those, who are the most near to them, are entitled to all the gratification which their attainments can bestow. Let there never be any refusal of their best to their best friends. Let not the father come out from his study, and ask or wish for half an hour's solace, — for the overture which he loved in the days of his youth, or the song which recalls to him Mara's tones, and retire ungratified. Let him not have to reclose his door, and entrench himself again in his solitary chamber, mortified perhaps by an impatient look, or reading in a reluctant expression, that his solicitation was not welcome.

It may possibly require a little self-denial to ensure always a cheerful contribution to the social entertainment, to dispose us to forsake a book, or a piece of embroidery, or a luxurious corner by the fire-side, and make the little effort that may be wished. Yet how important is it to make such slight sacrifices of personal ease, and to cherish the kindliness, without which the most intense affection is apt to decline.

There are cases where the power of contributing to domestic enjoyment may lead

to very important benefits. A desire to oblige, delicately manifested, wins upon the heart, and calls forth sentiments of tenderness. And in those most difficult and trying circumstances, where a young person may stand alone in her family, in her estimate of the importance of religion — where she alone has been led to know the vanity of earthly pleasures, and to shun the sins and follies of the world — where she has been the first and most highly favoured, and has preceded parents and brothers and sisters in the path of piety — what course is so likely to conciliate and to persuade, as that of prompt and unremitting attention? May not the youngest member of a family thus attain an influence by being always ready to take her part in giving pleasure to those at home? — may she not become most dear to a parent, — may she not sweetly exemplify the fruits of her superior principles, by showing a greater alacrity to impart pleasure than others who are not thus actuated? There is no more delightful exhibition of duty than that of a young person so circumstanced, who, far from assuming a forbidding deportment, and exciting a prejudice against her religion, is only the more

anxious to amuse and please, and thus draw those, with whom she is the most closely connected, by the cords of a grateful affection. And is it not far better that she should cultivate an art, which perhaps may be a frequent solace to some beloved relative, — that she should “take up her harp,” like David, and “play with her hand,” and thus possibly administer a soothing balm to a mind depressed, — that she should entwine herself round the affections of her own family by her cheerful devotion of talent to their gratification, — than that she should shroud herself in a mantle of reserve, and, by exclusiveness or indifference, convey the unpleasing impression, that her natural and kindly affections are nipped and withered?

It may be, that in her days of vanity, she would not have been careful to contribute to the enlivenment of her home, — that she would have thought it dull to sing or play to a near relative, or an old friend, — but let her *now* show that love, Christian love, is a stronger stimulus than any inferior motive, and that the minutiae of duty are regulated by the same abiding sentiment, the same fervid and glowing

influence, that prescribes the sacrifice of self in greater matters. Talent and accomplishment may doubtless thus be sanctified to high and holy purposes: they may thus be made the means of attracting to what is good, and of opposing a counter-influence to the seductions of the world. The swelling notes of Handel's sublime airs, the simple melody of a familiar psalm or hymn, never speak more affectingly to the heart, than when sustained by the voice of the young female Christian,—when poured forth, not merely with the power of the gifted songstress, and the skill of the well-taught musician, but with the feeling and piety of the genuine believer. It is then that we may taste the harmony of the songs of Zion; it is then, as we listen to the strains of the performer, that we may think how sweetly will she sing in her own land; it is then that our imagination may embody the vision of the golden harps, and bright company of the New Jerusalem; and that we may read in the glowing features of the saint on earth, a foretaste of her future bliss, when she shall “know that her Redeemer liveth, and in her flesh shall see her God.”

CHAPTER IX.

TEMPER.

IN our estimate of the tempers of others, we are all apt to allow too little for natural and constitutional diversity. This diversity may not, of course, be admitted as an apology for defects in temper; but it may, and must often account for them, and explain why, when there is an equal application of a counteracting principle, the effect is in one case less satisfactory than in another.

All value should undoubtedly be attached to excellence of temper: — nevertheless, temper, more than any other quality, is the result of original endowment. Not that this detracts from its worth: it is an inestimable gift; and the improvement of it, at least, is the effect of early discipline, and of infused principle. But some indulgence should be granted to those who are not naturally favoured; to those too, who, to the injudicious treatment of their infant years, may

ascribe a defect which seems interwoven with their very constitution. Whilst we admire and prize the placid amiability of a kind and even disposition,—whilst we are especially alive to its beauty, when it is grafted on a Christian stock, and rooted on the secure foundation of religious motives, — we should remember that the obstacles to the attainment of this serene and happy temperament are, in some cases, so much greater than in others, that an incorrect estimate of the force of the regulating principle might be formed, were we to judge of it merely by its results in this respect. There are individuals of so calm and equable a nature, that anger seems to them almost a strange passion; they feel, as it were intuitively, that it is not worth their while to be disturbed; and though they may lose some of their gentleness by collision with others, yet, when once brought under the influence of the Gospel, the effort to subdue irritation, and to restrain any unruly impulse, is comparatively slight, and can be made with so good a grace, that the movement to displeasure is scarcely perceptible.

Such persons may not be aware how much

they are indebted to natural disposition, and are apt to expect from others, especially from such as acknowledge the constraining sway of evangelical motives, the same freedom from irritation which they themselves display. And they judge sometimes with harshness, where this equanimity is not exhibited; they yield but small indulgence to occasional outbursts, — and, because they do not experience the temptation, do not allow for its power. They forget, too, that although the fault is evident, the contrition for it is not always so; and that, whilst they witness the weakness of an unguarded moment, they are not privy to the self-abasement and sorrow which a recollection of it calls forth. Defects in temper are more glaring than most others; in their nature they admit not of concealment; and whilst ambition, worldliness of spirit, love of pleasure, and indwelling corruptions of even a deeper die, may be shut up in the breast, and not incur detection, the subjects of irritability can throw no veil over their failings; the moment of trial and of fall are simultaneous; and the looker-on views

the fault in its prominence, and is not disposed to favour the offender.

For we are all apt to estimate both the good and evil qualities of others as they affect ourselves, and an undisciplined temper interferes too much with the comfort of those who come in contact with it, to meet with indulgence from them. A thousand follies are excused, and faults palliated, if they are not thus obnoxious. Such a one injures no one but himself—is the worldly apology for irregularity; and if this form of expression obtains only amongst such as are influenced by merely secular principle, still the excuse is virtually recognised by many who profess a higher standard. They have little toleration for what is perpetually marring their own tranquillity, whilst they forget inconsistencies which are kept out of sight, or at least give to the latter the benefit of their Christian forbearance. The equity and expediency of such a procedure may well be questioned, but it is only natural. Whatever we may do in our closets, we do not, amid the active affairs of life, stop to analyze either the causes or the com-

parative demerit of the failings of those around us; but pronounce on them a summary verdict, according to the immediate impression of them which we receive.

The fact of the constitutional diversity in temper can scarcely be denied by any who are at all accustomed to study character. We see it exemplified in childhood; and, indeed, it is nowhere so visible as in the early development of disposition. It is when reason and principle first begin to operate, and to discipline the unruly ebullition, that the force and nature of the latter are most evident, and that we can the most easily perceive in what manner, and to what extent, it exercises its influence.

There are certain results which experience warrants us to expect, and which we therefore naturally look for, without inquiring as to their cause, or the means by which they are effected. The curious investigator of the material world is not, however, satisfied with this matter-of-fact experience, but labours to ascertain general principles, and to trace to these the effects which daily occurrence renders familiar. And, in the same way, those who are interested in the scrutiny of

intellectual or moral phenomena, are glad to establish and define certain rules, in accordance with the wisdom and equity which mark the general economy, and to refer to them results, which ordinary observers admit, without caring to account for.

The principle of compensation is one of those striking features which mark the arrangements of Providence, in all their several departments. It is the consequence of a fault, — a fault, for the prevalence of which, revelation only teaches us to account; but the adjustment of the balance argues the discrimination and goodness of the apportioning hand. Admitting the operation of this principle, we may be the less reluctant to allow a natural diversity in temper. We shall expect, indeed, to find a defect in this or in any other particular, counterbalanced by some better quality; but we shall not refuse to ascribe irritability, where it exists, in some measure at least, to peculiar and original disposition.

And we shall generally find the balance fairly kept. If, in respect to mental endowments, the presence of one gift is generally so set off against the absence of another, that the

average is nearly equal, — with regard to moral qualities the proportion is even more nicely preserved.

The more thoroughly we investigate character, and study its various developments, the better shall we be satisfied that this is the case. In temper, it is those who are the most alive to kind and generous feeling who are peculiarly liable to irritability. The cold-hearted are calm and unexcitable, and the impressions they receive are so much less lively, that they remain unmoved by circumstances which kindle a flame in the enthusiastic. The very faults of temper seem sometimes almost the consequence of qualities which, in themselves, excite our interest. The sensibility which we love, is, from its nature, easily wounded; and the frankness which wins our affection exposes the susceptibility of the excitable breast, and brings to view those secret movements to displeasure which the reserved are enabled to conceal.

It is therefore of the first importance in the discipline of temper to trace its faults to their source. This must be the primary step, and it

is one which requires accurate and tender care. We observe in a family of children, that all are, in a greater or less degree, liable to irritation : all display, under their little trials, impatience or anger ; and therefore all demand reproof and correction. But these should be variously administered.

A greater error, indeed, cannot be committed, than to subject different dispositions to identically the same treatment, especially if the system be one of coercion. Sensitiveness, it has been remarked, may be the cause of irritability. This, though it ought not to excuse the fault, points out the sort of discipline it demands.

In such a case, a harsh unsympathising correction may be productive even of greater mischief than over indulgence. The suspicion of unkindness is the exciting cause of the irritability we lament ; and this may be so aggravated by a stern method of administering punishment, that the disposition may become soured, and the individual acutely fearful of being the subject of general disesteem. Nothing is more fatal to temper than its being pronounced *a bad temper*. The imputation wounds the spirit, and renders

the disposition really deserving of the character ascribed to it.

Yet this injury is sometimes inflicted in very early life, and a store of future unhappiness is thus laid up for the child of feeling. The cloud gathers on the brow; the murmur of discontent escapes the lips: and the impatient and angry reproof which these elicit, whilst they curb the more violent expression of feeling, increase the smouldering emotion within. There is no brightening up of the countenance, no melting of the heart: the young delinquent nurses the internal resentment, even though it may be outwardly repressed, and contracts a jealous irritability which is ever on the look out for occasions of offence.

To the faults of temper, of whatever kind or degree, there is no antidote so effectual as that which the Gospel furnishes; and it is from the non-application of this, practically and habitually, at an early age, that many of the unhappy results in after life, which we have so much reason to deplore, arise. The Gospel addresses itself to the affections, and it is here that the sensitive need soothing. The Gospel

will be remembered on future occasions of similar trial.

Not, but that frequent disappointments may occur, and must not be allowed to discourage. The hope of the teacher must bear up against many failures, and firmness and perseverance must characterize the system. But when the tone of discipline is undeviatingly kind, equable, and Christian,—when example corresponds with precept, —and the child sees, and itself experiences the beauty of consistent temper,—the result is usually no insufficient recompense. At any rate, the temptation, when it occurs, will not be yielded to without a struggle; and self-control, in after life, will be no new lesson.

The peculiar importance of the due regulation of temper to women will be readily admitted. Dependent as they are, equanimity and forbearance are essential even to their happiness; and most unwise is it in them to nurse an irritability, which must be self-tormenting. Circumstances are, of course, less under their control than of the other sex; and, unless they can acquiesce in an occasional thwarting of their own wishes, they

will experience discomfort in every relation of life.

An overwrought sensibility may prove a prolific source of misery to woman. The suspicion of unkindness or of indifference in others is like a wound,—perpetually exasperating itself; and the peevishness and discontent which it engenders, are the most likely means of exciting the very disesteem of which it complains. Nothing is more teasing to the objects of regard than this sort of temper. It is perpetually harassing them with imaginary jealousies, — brooding over them with suspicion, — exercising upon them a surveillance, which can scarcely fail to weary, and in time destroy the sincerest affection. And although it may be glossed over as an amiable weakness, or claim to be excused as excess of feeling, self-esteem and self-love are in fact its source.

The subject of such a temper is disquieted, because she supposes the conduct of others to have always reference to *herself*. Do those around her,—does her husband or her friend look grave? *she* has not, as she once had, the power to make

them happy. Does any one whom she loves meet her with a cloud upon the brow?—she is herself the cause—she is not esteemed or welcomed as heretofore. Is censure cast upon a fault?—the reproof was meant for her. Is vexation expressed?—she is, herself, the source of the annoyance, or the subject of displeasure.

It would perhaps be but a slight relief to such a person to undeceive her, — to convince her that, to a head-ache, or to some cause unconnected with herself, must be ascribed the disquietude for which she has taken credit; or that she was *not* pointed at in animadversions which she had appropriated; in short, to convince her that she is not quite so much in the thoughts as she had imagined. For then she would immediately complain that she was an object of neglect, and would be more apt to take offence at this suspicion, than at any other chimera of her self-afflicting fancy.

Where any symptom of such a disposition appears in childhood, a judicious and affectionate treatment may do much towards its remedy; but it requires a nice and steady hand. The discipline of a nursery or a school is sometimes

peculiarly unsuitable; and it is those only who understand, and who have time and discrimination to mark the workings of the heart, and the manner in which it is affected by external circumstances, who are qualified to execute so difficult a task.

Dissatisfaction, arising from some cause or other, is the ordinary source of irritable temper. The want of content within frets the spirit, and is outwardly expressed by peevishness and ill-humour. To allay unhappiness, and substitute internal cheerfulness, is therefore the only radical cure.

There are some who, in childhood, are painfully distrustful of their own capabilities, who labour under the distressing conviction that they are inferior to those around them; or, at any rate, who imagine that they are so reputed: and this impression serves not merely as a check to their intellectual improvement, but embitters their happiness, and consequently sours their disposition. In such cases, to encourage by the exhibition of kindness, to excite by motives of duty, to infuse a principle of hope, will be the wisest treatment; for it will effect an improve-

ment in temper, by inducing virtuous and successful efforts, and thus relieve the mind from the subject of its apprehension.

But perhaps the most painful exhibitions of temper are those which proceed from jealousy; and when this passion finds place amongst women, it assumes sometimes so mean a form, and is exercised about such trivial matters, that it renders the subject of it contemptible, as well as unamiable.

The objects of worldly ambition, amongst women, are ordinarily of an unimportant nature, and the conviction which we have of their want of value, makes us blush for those who display any eagerness in competition for them. Nevertheless, the ill-humour, which, in spite of social restraint, may be observed in individual conduct, arises not unfrequently from a sentiment of envy, which some petty distinction in another has called forth.

The desire for admiration is occasionally so strong a passion, that a rival cannot be regarded with complacency: and perhaps it must be allowed that a woman, pre-eminent in any way, is not a favourite with the generality of her own

sex. Some, at least, there will be who appear not unwilling to detract from her superiority, to discover a blemish, to lay hold of a weak point, which may reduce her to the ordinary level. Beauty possibly excites less of this unamiable feeling than any other endowment. It is so unquestionably a gift, that there can be no self-reproach for not possessing it. But mental superiority, accomplishment, conversational talent, even goodness, are apt to be looked upon with a deteriorating eye, and to call forth a sentiment, which is not one of cordial kindness.

Of all propensities, a habit of jealousy should be the most carefully corrected in early life; for most unamiable is its exhibition in maturer years. The superiority of another, instead of stimulating to exertion, only creates an anxiety to undervalue the excellence which cannot be denied. This disposition shows itself, not by attack, but by a more insidious, though not less intelligible mode. Even in bestowing commendation, there may be an expression — a tone of voice — a look — or perhaps an exaggeration in praise, which, whilst it seems the

farthest possibly from envy, is, in fact, only a demonstration of it. It is a panegyric which depreciates what it professes to exalt.

In such instances, the feeling which originates this conduct may not unfrequently be detected by others, more readily than by the person who experiences it; and it cannot but convey an impression much to the disfavoured of the subject of it. We soon discern the jealousy which frets at the estimation in which others are held, and is always leading her who is affected by it, to imply her own inferiority from any commendation that is bestowed elsewhere. Such a disposition argues a littleness of mind; and if it is ever associated with moral or intellectual worth, it is one of the worst blemishes which can attach to either. Yet even this may originate in early life, from an anxious desire for approbation, and a despair of obtaining it. A child, whose talents are not so prominent, or so precocious, as those of her nursery associates, — who does not show off so well as her brothers and sisters, — is herself conscious of the difference, and marks, often with an exquisite sensibility, the deficiency of interest

which she excites. There may be no system of positive favouritism, no absolute partiality, but there is a want of regard, a passing by; and the little creature shrinks into her shell of obscurity, depressed and unnoticed.

The sentiment, naturally engendered in the heart by such neglect, will not be one merely of disappointment, — rather, it is to be feared, it will become jealousy. The poor child looks upon her more successful companions with a jaundiced eye, and is not, therefore, henceforth displeased when any little disfavour attaches to them.

Now, however vigilantly such a disposition should be corrected in early life, yet, even *here* again, stern reproof will be of no avail. On the contrary, the child needs to be assured of the regard of those around her; and the fault will more readily yield to a general system of kindness and encouragement, than to punishment or censure.

It has been remarked, that to communicate or to restore happiness is the best antidote to faults of temper; and it is because real religion involves internal peace, that *this* is so peculiarly

a corrective to them. It is not merely because Christianity places a restraint upon all evil passions, because the law of kindness is a part of its prescriptive code, — but because it lays the only sure basis for happiness, and, when rightly understood, is the source of never-failing consolations, that it allays the unruly movements of an irritable disposition. The assurance that whatever be the trials of this life, eternal bliss is ours, — the conviction that all human regard, or honour, is of little force in comparison of the Almighty love which is lavished upon us, — the confidence which enables us, with grateful appropriation, to claim an interest in the amplest promises of gospel grace, these,—the present inheritance of the believer,—can hardly be enjoyed, without their producing a calm within the breast, which vexation cannot ruffle. And in the proportion that this is not the case, the privileges of the believer are not enjoyed; Christian principle is not influential, and original corruption has still sway.

Here then lies the force of the argument for the *early* correction of temper by such constraining motives. We all feel the stirrings of the root or

bitterness within, — we each have to contend with a peculiar and individual germ of evil : but those who in after life are conscious that their infirmity is that of temper, that it is ever ready to break forth on sudden temptation, and that it occasions them their sorest conflicts, and their most poignant regrets, will bitterly lament that the remedy was not more effectively applied before their character had received its tone, and their heart its most lasting impressions. If the subjects of late conversion find in the recurrence of evil or unbelieving thoughts, in the prevalence of the long-indulged passion, constant remembrance of the sins of their former years, — those, whose trials are of temper, have equal, if not greater reason to grieve at the ascendancy which their unhappy propensity has acquired. They have contracted a habit of irritability, which even their religion can scarcely overcome, and they fall almost unawares into a fault, to which there is perpetual temptation, and which indulgence has rendered inveterate.

External trials, such as ill-health, bereavements, or worldly vexations, may have an unhappy effect upon temper, and either increase

constitutional irritability, or sour a disposition not previously unamiable. Religion, again, is the only preventive of this evil. The effect of deprivations upon those whose affections are centred on earthly objects, is only to render them unhappy. They fret against the appointment, because it interferes with their pleasure; and they are the more tenacious of the good things that remain, from the fear lest these too should be taken from them.

It is, indeed, to be lamented, when such is the effect of dispensations, the intention of which is the very reverse. Christianity draws lessons not merely of patience, but of hope, from earthly losses: its ground of consolation is strengthened, rather than disturbed, by the "affliction that is but for a moment!"

At the same time, if internal tranquillity be the secret of good temper, the latter again is influential in producing happiness. There is assuredly no quality which so immediately determines the peace of an individual or a family, as temper. If the world does frown, — if circumstances be adverse, — if hopes fail, — a happy tempered person will still bear up; and

the serene front of the Christian will be lifted up as a beacon amid clouds and tempests, and will encourage the drooping spirits of those who have not an equal ground of hope. And in the minor trials of life, — for it is in these that temper is mainly exhibited, — peaceful is the course of one who has learnt to subdue irritation, who can be the subject of petty annoyance without feeling disturbed by it, and who had rather suffer a disappointment, than fret on account of it.

Those are, in every way, the best calculators, who maintain the greatest equanimity; for, besides that they spare themselves the pain of being vexed, they gain, by their composure, influence and respect, and enjoy the exercise of their judgment at times when others, perhaps, have not the advantage of similar self-possession.

It is not for any one to withdraw the veil of domestic privacy. Temper may be the canker-worm that spoils the peace of many a private hearth. Instead of the kind and cheerful smile, the urbane and courteous deportment, the placid endurance of the ills of life, and the willing

sacrifice of personal comfort to oblige another, we may witness, alas ! too often, the pettish remark, the sullen look ; and find that the passing occurrences of the hour call forth repeated exhibitions of fretfulness and impatience. Nevertheless, it becomes not any of the members of a family to carry the faults of those who are dear to them beyond their own walls, and to expose infirmities, which charity should bear with, and affection forget. If it be the lot of any to be associated with those, who are not blessed with a calm and happy temperament ; and if they have, or think they have, themselves, the advantage in this particular, — let them prove their superiority by their endurance of the trial, whatever it may be. Let them forget the words spoken in anger, and treasure up only those which express the permanent feelings of the heart ; and let them never, by a heartless severity, check the relents of the grieved spirit, — nor fail to soothe and encourage, when regret and repentance succeed temporary irritation.

There are some dispositions which take credit for good temper, which do not at all deserve

the name. Indifference and want of feeling are not good temper; and when these are brought into collision with irritability, they act as a provocative. Nothing is more trying to persons of acute sensibility, than to see those, whom they think ought to sympathise with them, careless of what frets and grieves themselves. It may be difficult, in cases of offence, to preserve the medium, to show so much feeling as affords an assurance of interest, and at the same time does not exasperate the provocation. But this is a lesson which affection teaches, and which those who possess a really Christian spirit will take pains to learn.

No temper can be really amiable which is not the result of a feeling heart. The self-control which merely restrains the expression of anger, does not involve that benevolence of disposition, which is the essential ingredient in good temper. It may be the result of some principle; but Christian principle requires more. It requires sentiments of kindness, and active efforts of good-will.

Good temper is like a sunny day: it sheds a brightness over every thing. It is the sweet-

ener of toil, and the soother of disquietude. Much, indeed, of pain and anxiety must we all suffer in our passage through this world. Every day brings its burthen. The husband goes forth in the morning to his professional duties ; he cannot foresee what trial he may encounter, what failure of hopes, of friendships, or of prospects may meet him, before he returns to his home ; but, if he can anticipate *there*, the beaming and hopeful smile, and the soothing attention, he feels that his cross, whatever it may be, will be lightened, and that his domestic happiness is still secure.

It is the interest, therefore, as well as the duty of a woman to cultivate good temper, and to have ever ready some word or look of cheerfulness, of encouragement, or at least, of sympathy. A really feeling heart will dictate the conduct which will be most acceptable, will teach the delicacy which *times* a kindness, as well as renders it, and forbears all officious attentions, whilst it ever evinces a readiness to oblige.

Considerateness is also a part of a Christian temper. This implies a carefulness, not to ex-

cite irritation, — not to give trouble, — not to occasion pain : it implies an absence of selfishness, and a continual solicitude for the good of others.

Such a temper is displayed in the most minute and seemingly trivial particulars. For those who possess it will not grudge to go out of their path, even to please a child, or to relieve a suffering animal. They are ever on the watch to lessen the sum of woe, or to augment that of happiness ; and they consider not *that* time lost, which is instrumental in promoting, in however small a degree, either of these ends.

It need scarcely be said that this temper is of more value than many more brilliant endowments, that it is amongst the first recommendations to a woman, in every domestic relation ; and that especially in that tie, which, though the nearest on earth, is not one of kindred, it is assuredly the most effectual cement of affection. It is not, indeed, so much a means of attracting or exciting love, as it is of securing it. In fact, it is scarcely known, until familiarity draws aside the veil of social restraint, and the character, with its real faults and virtues,

is unfolded in the privacy of home. But it may be said, and without unfairness, that subsequent attachment, and consequently subsequent conjugal happiness, are, with but few exceptions, in proportion to the good, and amiable, and Christian temper of the wife.

And if we view temper with reference to spiritual progress,—as the graces of disposition are amongst the most winning ornaments of the religious character, so are they eminently subservient to its improvement and perfection. Irritability is a stumbling-block, not only to others, but to ourselves. It disturbs our peace, by making us doubt of the reality of the spiritual change within us; and when the peace of a Christian is disturbed, every grace languishes. On the contrary, a serene and benevolent temper is a source of internal happiness, and is itself the essence of the Gospel.

Happy it truly is, as has been said, when the bias is given to temper in the earliest years; when the movement to impatience is checked before it becomes habitual, and irritability allayed before it affixes on the character the stamp of peevishness, or envy, or discontent.

For, before we may be aware, the die may be cast; and an injudicious treatment may be the origin of a mischief which will sadden the complexion of a subsequent life, or which it will cost many a laborious effort, many a painful struggle, to repair.

CHAPTER X.

TASTE.

As, by taste, we imply our perception of whatever is agreeable to ourselves, or intrinsically beautiful, and our faculty of discriminating between these, and the opposite qualities, we must, of course, attach to the term a comprehensive meaning. It expresses indeed a power which is exercised with reference to almost every object; an intellectual sense, by means of which we instinctively discern what we like or dislike; and the movements of which, though sometimes scarcely to be defined or accounted for, are distinctly intelligible to ourselves, and decide our preferences, determine our opinions, and have a material influence upon our happiness.

It has been objected to the prevalent acceptance of the word taste, that it is indefinite and

vague,—that, by taste, we may mean something so subtle as to escape apprehension,—that it is a conventional term, to which it is competent to the most limited and fastidious tribunal to affix an arbitrary meaning: and therefore it is said that taste furnishes a convenient code, embracing offences not cognizable by any other, and denouncing a stigma against imaginary faults.

Admitting, however, that the term may be thus abused, and that we may justly be suspicious of a phrase which savours of exclusiveness, we must not take exception at a form of speech for which we could scarcely find a substitute, nor neglect the improvement of a faculty, which is one of the distinctive properties of a refined mind. That such and such a thing is in bad taste, may be the cant phraseology of a coterie, and may convey a very ambiguous intimation of the offence complained of, or it may serve as a condemnation of what is merely obnoxious to prejudice. Nevertheless, the standard of true taste is neither indefinite nor imaginary; and its laws, though not written, are universally

recognised, and felt by all, who are the subjects of its influence.

Taste is, as it were, the nerve of the mind. It is acutely sensitive of every thing that offends it, and shrinks from contact with whatever is thus displeasing. And it frequently indicates also, not only what is grateful to itself, but what will prove generally salutary to the intellectual and moral frame. It is true that, in this latter respect, it may not be always a sure criterion; that it may not give *immediate* notice of the mischief that lurks beneath a graceful covering: but, if delicately and rightly nurtured, its detection of evil will be as accurate as its perception of elegance or beauty. For instance, where it is rightly disciplined, it will sympathise both with the moral and with the religious sense, and will resent an outrage to either, as an insult to itself.

The intellectual taste is like the natural faculty. It may not be always possible to assign a reason for its preferences or dislikes, but these are, in a healthful subject, the intimation of what is wholesome, and not the capricious fancies of a sated appetite.

Taste, therefore, although its immediate reference is, not to what is intrinsically good or bad, but rather to what is agreeable or the reverse, is a power given us for important uses, and has a great influence in determining the general character. It is the result, no doubt, of other intellectual qualities, as well as of external causes; but, it has also an influence on the former, and gives a marked and individual colouring to the mind.

Perhaps few faculties are of such universal application as taste. It is exhibited in the minutest as well as the most important particulars of conduct; it influences the affections; it gives a bias to the opinions; its control over the inclinations is absolute. For, though where judgment may be opposed to taste, a conviction of duty may determine us to follow the dictates of the former rather than of the latter, yet the bias will remain in favour of the more seductive guide, and our sense of what is, or is not pleasing to us, will be apt to regulate, at least the degree of ardour, with which we follow a pursuit, or prosecute a line of action.

Taste, there can be little doubt, depends, in

great measure, on association. We can account for it often on no other grounds. Our tastes and distates proceed, for the most part, from the power which the objects of them have to recall other ideas to the mind. And persons of superior cultivation have not only established, for themselves, a higher standard of grace or excellency, to which they refer,—but they have attained to a quicker perception of the relation of things to each other. They trace the connection immediately, and as it were intuitively; and they, at once, distinguish between what is allied to elegance, and what is, in however remote a degree, connected with any thing displeasing or vulgar.

This is especially true with regard to manner. Persons of superior refinement are the most apt to detect inelegance in manner. They are instantly offended at a deportment which is, in their minds, connected with vulgarity; and associations which might escape others, are recognised by them. Their organ is peculiarly delicate. As a practised ear can detect in the vibration of a single string, its accordant tones, — so persons of cultivated taste at once perceive

the affinity between a style or manner, and the tone of mind, of which it is the symptom and the expression. And therefore such persons are often designated as fastidious. Doubtless there may be a fastidiousness which finds blemishes in the most perfect work, and a prejudice which is causelessly offended; but, in general, those minds which are the most highly cultivated, are the most accurate discerners, and are the least disposed to take groundless exceptions.

There cannot be a greater mistake than to regard as trivial, the formation of our own taste, or the pleasing that of others. Upon the former, the latter, in great measure, depends. We shall succeed in rendering ourselves agreeable to those whose taste is the most accurate, in proportion as our own is moulded on the most correct model: and although, by persons of inferior refinement, bad taste may not only be tolerated, but may even call forth in them admiration, yet good taste can *offend* no one, and, by a strict adherence to its dictates, we shall be most likely to raise the standard of those with whom we may chance to be associated.



A correct taste is more properly the result of a general moral and intellectual culture, than of any direct rules or discipline. The subject, at all events, admits of no special directions. It is a matter of feeling; it rests upon a few broad principles; and when these are interwoven with the character, the desired end will be attained. Supposing, indeed, the tone to have been thus given, a hint, as to any particular in which taste is concerned, will be at once understood and improved; but where this mental refinement is wanting, it is of no use to enjoin one thing, or prohibit another.

The first great fundamental rule of good taste is, *to be natural*; and it is from an infringement of this, that many of our worst mistakes proceed. In manner or style, affectation is the source of the most flagrant offences against taste. Whether it be an affectation of fashion, or of learning, of ignorance, of wit, or of piety, it will be equally repugnant to the delicacy of a superior mind. Affectation, indeed, is an offence against high moral feeling. It excites a suspicion of the *truth* of those who are guilty

of it; and although it may have resolved itself into a mere habit, we cannot help feeling that it originates in artifice.

Affectation is also symptomatic of a mean and contracted mind. The affectation of fashion is the vice of those who have no pretensions to fashion. Fashion itself is an affectation;—but the imitation of fashion is always worse than the caricature it copies. High-bred persons are always simple; and artificial manners are generally only a cloak for vulgarity. They possess no elegance; but their features are so marked that they furnish an easy subject for imitation, and can be as readily appropriated as any other article of external decoration.

With regard to literary affectation, it may be remarked with pleasure, that whilst the education of women is, according to the present system, far more intellectual than it was a century ago, or probably than it ever was, a display of learning is by no means in vogue, even amongst our savantes. The *precieuse* of Moliere is now seldom encountered. If affectation obtains, it is of a different kind. Sometimes, indeed, learned ladies seem so to dread being

estimated merely for their learning, that they affect fashion, or any thing but literature.

It is an instance, not, it may be feared, altogether uncommon, of the weakness of genius, that it should pretend to what it ought to condemn. Yet it would seem that there is a waywardness of heart, which often renders us most ambitious of that, which we do not and cannot possess, even though our own endowments are greatly superior to the objects which we covet. It is related of a celebrated woman, on whom the charms of person had been but sparingly bestowed, that, when complimented for her mental endowments, she used to say, "I care not to hear that I am clever; tell me I am beautiful, and it will please me." This is but an avowal of what *manner* little less equivocally expresses, when, instead of appearing what we are, we endeavour to seem something that we are not. The genuine *bas bleu* would make the most of her little stock of learning; would get up, perhaps, her subject of conversation; would show off her exclusive attainments. But in the present day we may see women of science or literature assuming a different tone, — talk-

ing with satisfaction of their acquaintance with the beau monde, — affecting its phraseology, — condescending even to its frivolity. This is in worse taste than a display of learning. For it argues greater weakness to appear desirous of a distinction to which there is little claim, and which, indeed, is unworthy ambition, than to be tenacious of a celebrity not wholly undeserved.

The secret of pleasing is to be natural. Were it worth while to seek the favour of people of fashion, still *this* would be the most likely means of obtaining it. They do not court an intellectual woman, — if they court her at all, — with an expectation of finding her one of themselves. On the contrary, they are the first to think disparagingly of her, when she attempts to vie with them on their own ground. Neither should she strive, in any society, to act a part. Her good taste will show itself in being unconstrained, — in conversing without effort, — in being solicitous neither to display her learning nor to conceal it, — and in rendering her deportment, as nearly as she may, in all points, a transcript of her mind.

But there is nothing in which the appearance of affectation should be so scrupulously avoided as in all matters in which *religion* is concerned. At the same time, we must be aware that *that* is not unfrequently styled religious affectation which is the result of true piety. Those who have little godliness themselves dislike the appearance of it in others, and are glad to find fault with this, under the pretext that it is merely assumed. Still religious persons would avoid much offence, were they more careful that all their expressions on the subject of religion were perfectly sincere. That they are conscientiously in earnest, that religion is felt by them as a matter of reality there is no doubt; still they are sometimes apt to adopt forms of speech, more because they are used by others, and have thus obtained a sanction, than because they embody the genuine sentiments of the heart at the time of utterance. And, not only are these, unintelligible, to such as have not the same spiritual apprehension,—but, from the manner and the occasions of their use, they convey a suspicion that they are rather the symbol

of religious profession, than the spontaneous expression of what is actually thought or felt.

Such is the disposition of our nature to extract evil even from good, that familiarity with religious subjects may almost induce a degree of insincerity with relation to them. We are accustomed frequently to hear and speak of them, and to frame our language with reference to them. Even ordinary forms of speech are in this way moulded in conformity to religious sentiments. And therefore, unless the heart is scrupulously watched, there is danger lest we be betrayed into insincerity; lest expressions go beyond feelings, and become mere commonplace words of course,—assumed even as the language of fashion is by the world.

It is not merely the irreligious who are offended by this affectation: there are none who are more grieved by it than Christians of a refined and superior mind. For no taste is more delicate than that of the Christian, and, in matters of religion, it is peculiarly sensitive; and, therefore, a marked phraseology, or an imitation of peculiarities generally offends.

It is to be regretted that any such manner-

isms should be adopted; that one phrase should be preferred to another, equally emphatic, merely because it belongs to a certain school, — that quaint forms of speech, obsolete, or newly coined words, should be substituted for simple and natural language. All these may have the sanction of high example, — of eloquence, of which they are the blemishes, or which is of so peculiar a cast, or commanding an order, that it can safely pass by ordinary rules. But the same expressions, when borrowed, lose their apology. And though such trifles should not stand in the way of truth, they may excite or keep up a prejudice; they may serve as obstacles to the reception of a doctrine; and they will assuredly not recommend truth to any.

Another important rule for the regulation of taste, is to consult suitability. The reason which we ordinarily have to assign for finding fault with the taste of any thing is, that it is unsuitable. With reference to many subjects, indeed, taste decides relatively, rather than abstractedly. It views things, not merely as they are in themselves, — but as they are, or are

not, adapted to the objects with which they are associated, and the circumstances of their use. It is indeed not uncommon for us to admire, separately considered, what we dislike in the connexion in which we find it. In such points as dress, furniture, establishments, what is to be approved in one case will produce an unfavourable impression in another; and mistakes often arise from judging of things by themselves, or in associations different from those in which we intend to place them, and not considering them with reference to their destined position.

Suitability is always the *professed* guide in matters of taste. If an artist is consulted, the plea which she deems most likely to decide the wavering choice, is "that the object for selection is becoming." Her judgment may be questioned; but the plea which she urges is a practical lesson on the principles of taste.

Besides, in our own application of the rule, we have to take into account that of which the artist may be ignorant — not merely what would adorn, — but what may suit our character, position, and circumstances. Are we pro-

fessedly religious? — Sobriety in all outward adornings is the subject of express scriptural precept: not only so, — it is congenial to the Christian character, — suitable to the Christian temper. The style of a religious person should be moderate, because moderation is in accordance with the whole tone of the Gospel. On the contrary, extravagance of any kind is incongruous, and is felt to be in bad taste, not merely by serious persons, but in an equal, if not greater degree, by persons of the world.

Still we may err in a contrary extreme. We may unnecessarily offend by extreme plainness, — not merely by slovenliness, — *that* indeed is quite unseemly in a Christian, — is as opposed to Christian morals as extravagance. But in things indifferent we should endeavour to *recommend* our religion. It can serve no purpose to select a dress for no apparent reason but for its want of elegance — to prefer the unbecoming to the graceful — to adopt in external arrangements a style inferior to our position, and which attracts notice by its meanness.

Again, what may be suitable with reference to one particular, may not be so with regard to

others, — what may agree with our character, may not be quite congruous to our station, — what may suit our station, may not our circumstances. Certain positions seem to demand a certain régime: this is a worldly maxim, and no doubt is available as an apology for secular pomp and show: nevertheless it is, under restrictions, necessary to be observed. It is not for the Christian to draw remark by an affectation of coarseness, by a frugality which borders on penuriousness. Good taste adjusts the respective proportions: it teaches Christians of inferior station to avoid vying in external decorations with a higher rank, and those of superior degree to provide things suitable. It forbids even wealth from competing with station, and moderate means from attempting the appointments of wealth. It enjoins us never to be ashamed of our actual circumstances; and teaches that the more strictly our arrangements are in keeping with these, the greater will be the prepossession in our favour.

It is equally pleasing to observe the woman of high degree with the appointments becoming her station, regulated with the grace and pro-

priety which mark superior minds, and, at the same time, the moderation that points to a more enduring portion ; — and one in a more humble position, in whose arrangements suitability is the principle, and where the same tone of chastened sobriety gives a consistent character to the whole. In both, there is no appearance of effort, — nothing strained or affected ; there is, in short, nothing remarkable. The excellence of each consists in attracting little, or no notice, and in thus proving the real subordination in which external things are held. In both there is the same developement of Christian feeling, — which studies proportion, not singularity, — and which, while it does not affect indifference, has a higher end in view than the gratification of a fancy.

It is almost needless to say, that taste leads us to avoid low or vulgar associations. Refinement is the opposite of vulgarity ; and as taste is the property of a refined mind, it of course involves a dislike to any thing approaching to vulgarity. Still the boundary lines are not so marked as might be imagined. Prejudice may reject, as vulgar, what is not really

so. There is a fastidiousness which would reject much that is true, and destroy much that is beautiful. We are indebted to those to whom the poetry of nature owes its revival*, for the restoration to their use and dignity of many words and images, which an artificial refinement had discarded as inadmissible in verse. The prejudice, which they successfully combated, is of general application. It is the result of a taste falsely and effeminately nurtured, which would take away from eloquence its energy, and disallow to simplicity its beauty and its pathos. It is this which often, in religion, is offended at the plain spoken language of truth, which takes exception at a word because it is not found in its own authorised vocabulary, and cannot tolerate a deviation from the conventional standard which itself has prescribed. To such a tone of mind the phraseology of Scripture is often unpalatable, and the emphatic style of the fathers of theology is too strong and homely. The faithful exposition of doctrine must be diluted; the phrase which savours too much of evangelical plainness must be softened down; and the vitality

* Coleridge and Wordsworth.

and power of truth be weakened by an accommodation to a hypercritical refinement.

True taste sees beauty and appropriateness, where prejudice takes offence. It delights in the terse and expressive idiom, although it may not have the sanction of modern use; in the nervous period, though it may want some of the graces of finished art. It discerns, indeed, that there are subjects, to which great plainness of speech is appropriate; and that these are never so well handled, as when the style is in strict subservience to the matter of discussion. Not but that taste is offended by uncouthness of any kind, or by manner or expression below the dignity of the subject treated of. It is to be regretted when what is intrinsically valuable, is rendered unacceptable by any thing adscititious; when an effort seems to be made, as is occasionally the case, to clothe important instruction in so coarse a dress that it courts the opposition of the refined and intellectual. A Christian, however sensitive, will always value wholesome doctrine in spite of an unseemly garb, — will prize the “apples of gold,” although they be not “set in

pictures of silver;" nevertheless, an outrage to taste must jar on the nerve of a cultivated mind; and the more so, because such a mind will sympathise with the feelings of those who, with like sensibility, are not equally disposed to make allowance for the truth's sake.

Vulgarity involves what is intrinsically low and mean. If we bear this in mind, we may find reason to correct some preconceived prejudices. We may determine *that* to be vulgar, which may not ordinarily be deemed so; and, on the contrary, we may exculpate from the censure, what we may have thought deserved it. Homeliness by no means implies vulgarity: we are accustomed to see vulgarity in connexion with it, and may therefore confound the one with the other; but where homeliness is suitable, it is in the best taste, because in the best keeping. On the contrary, pretension is, and must be vulgar: it is the sign of a low mind. Therefore a pretence at *gentility* (as it is called) is vulgar in circumstances, where homeliness is quite the reverse.

This is true with regard to general appointments, and to every thing in which taste is con-

cerned. We enter a house of humble station ; we find the mistress of the family engaged in domestic arrangements, — or, what is more trying, we disturb a family meal : — there is no discomposure, — no running away to change the dress, — no apology for the frugal board. Every thing may be homely, — perhaps poor ; but every thing is consistent ; and we take leave admiring the good taste and good feeling that do not shrink from a discovery of that, for which there is no real cause to blush, — but of which inferior minds would be ashamed. In the same way, manner may be unpolished, — nay, even awkward, — yet it is not necessarily vulgar, because it may be natural. But to attempt to rise above our level — to affect a style which we cannot compass — to deal in flourish, where simplicity would be far more appropriate, *is* vulgar, because it shows an impatience of our station, and a desire to appear above it. The *gaucherie*, — the unintentional blunder, — nay, even the provincialism of the uneducated, — is *not* vulgar, in comparison with the affectation which is always making an effort to seem fine.

Familiarity with superiors is, for this reason,

vulgar. Ease is undoubtedly the symptom of good breeding; but it is the ease which is natural, not the ease which is an effort. It is the being at ease in our own position, not the attempting to be at ease in that which is not ours. We may observe that the more exalted the rank, the more scrupulous is the respect that is paid to still superior station. Yet this is only a proof that the higher the breeding, the more obligatory are the rules of good manners considered.

There are none who ought to be more delicate in this particular than religious persons. Christians of superior rank learn humility in the school of Christ. It is much to be lamented when their kindness induces disrespect from those, whom it ought to render only the more deferential. True taste would show the error, and would teach that delicacy, which is the more shy of taking a liberty, where there is the greater freedom of access.

One happy effect of religion is to promote intercourse between all ranks. Spiritual brotherhood, however, should not be made a plea for undue familiarity; and it is surely quite

inconsistent with true humility when the inferior loses sight of difference of station, and is less respectful towards Christian superiors, than towards those who have only a worldly claim to deference.

There is no breeding so correct as that which is founded on Christian principles. "Saint Paul was a perfect gentleman" is the remark of more than one acute observer. And the more we are imbued with the self-denying and Christian spirit, the more tender shall we be of the feelings of others, and the better shall we know how to spare them.

Vain persons are always erring against taste. Either there is a display of egotism, — which, whilst it wounds us, excites contempt, — or there is an attempt at show, — a studious exhibition of tinsel, which only creates a suspicion that there is poverty behind.

Taste, however various in its application, is one and the same organ, and the result either of natural conformation or of mental discipline. In its application to art it is still the same faculty; only its exercise in this particular does not involve its development with reference

to other subjects. A good painter or musician may have little or no taste in things which are not connected with his art.

Still, as taste is the indication of the tone of mind, all that improves the mind tends to refine the taste; and it is mainly by mental culture, and the regulation of moral temper and feeling, that the faculty is formed. It may be in some cases a natural gift; and where there is a constitutional lack of it, it is confessedly very difficult to impart it: but it is a faculty, too, capable of much improvement.

No one will deny that it forms an important constituent in female character. It is the secret of fascination, good manners, good arrangement. Why is it that the society of some estimable women gives little pleasure, — that it is shunned rather than courted. They are kind-hearted, good persons, but though we esteem, we cannot like them. We cannot converse with them five minutes without feeling a discordant note. They have no delicacy, — no tact.

On the contrary, in others, religion appears so attractive that their fascination is felt

even by those who have no relish for their principles. If they plead for a benevolent object, they do it so well and so appropriately, that they are ordinarily successful; without any seeming effort, they win their way, — recommend their cause, — establish their footing in the hearts of all who are capable of appreciating them. Such women are objects of our love; their influence is recognised, and felt, whilst others equally excellent perhaps, have no such sway, but have sometimes even the misfortune to mar what they purpose to advance.

In like manner, in some families all is consistent: there is nothing unnatural, no excess or deficiency, — every thing is happily blended — every thing is harmonious and proportionate. Hence, the impression produced is favourable; and we learn the importance of studying that on which the power of pleasing is so much dependent. But many of the points of which taste has cognizance, lie peculiarly within the province of women; and therefore its improvement is not an unimportant part of the discipline of their minds. It is not unfrequently remarked, that

in questions of taste, even in trivial matters, men are more correct than the other sex ;— that they select with better judgment, arrange with greater skill, and that even when at a glance they reverse the award of female judgment, they are generally in the right. This may be because they are free from certain prejudices to which women are too much subjected, — because they consult their own preferences rather than the decrees of fashion, — because they inquire what is graceful, not what is prescribed. Or it may be, that taste is allied to the highest faculties of mind, and as these are pre-eminent in the superior sex, so taste in them is also more advanced. We may gather, however, from this fact a hint as to its cultivation. We may learn that it will be in proportion to general intellectual improvement, and to our studying the standard of nature, rather than that of any arbitrary appointment.

Persons of taste are, as has been before remarked, the best qualified to appreciate real excellence. In composition, it is such readers who are gratified by purity of style and diction, and who can really estimate its merit. Their



judgment will often resemble that of the preceptor, who, when his scholars brought up their verses, used to say, "if there is any thing in these you think particularly fine, draw your pen through it." It will often expunge what others might admire; will discern blots which a less accurate organ would not detect; will regret the blemishes of excellence; and may even close a book, on account of some violation of taste, in spite of an acknowledgment of its intrinsic merit. But it is to such arbitrament that literature and art must submit; and the student, in both, must make every effort to erect the standard in his own mind. In the same way, the power of discrimination should be improved with reference to ordinary matters.

The quality we advocate, it is acknowledged, is the attainment of ripened experience; nevertheless the foundation for its formation is laid in youth; and youth is spared many an error, by an attention to its culture. A good taste grows insensibly. Were a critic asked as to the best means of forming a correct style, would not his answer be — Read the best authors —

study the best models—cultivate the moral feelings?—in short, elevate, in every way, the tone of mind. Now such counsel holds good with reference to every other department of taste.

Example and association are the most ordinary, and the most effectual, means by which taste is determined. Taste is imitative; it follows the lead of others. It has indeed so much to do with the opinions of others, that it cannot but be guided by them. There is but little original taste. *I like*, cannot stand out against the world. The taste of very young people is therefore chiefly dependent upon what they see at home. Give the tone, and they adopt it. In manner, style, dress, all external matters, they will probably take their *first* model from their *mother*.

What is dropt in conversation may have much influence in the formation and discipline of taste. We may most of us look back to our early years, and recall hints, which have never been forgotten. The delicacy of taste is, indeed, best communicated orally; the eyes of young people may thus be soon opened to discriminate; and they will learn to sympathise with their instruc-

tors. In this way an influence is established, which will counteract or modify impressions subsequently received. When in the second stage of life, young people seem disposed, in matters of taste, to follow others rather than their parents, it is probably attributable to some decided defect in the latter, or to their having taken little pains to communicate their own impressions.

The evil of affectation has already been insisted on. We should be on our guard against its earliest symptom. The first time that its appearance can be detected, — that the little girl enters the room with any but a natural air, — she should receive a check. Let us not be tempted to smile at her attempt, still less to give a look of approval. It is the intimation of mischief which those who know the heart will fear: it may be the germ of conceit or coquetry, which, if not eradicated, would expand into the full-grown weed.

Above all, it is important that children should not witness affectation in those to whom they look up. It will soon appear in them, if they observe it in their teachers. Let them

not be able to detect any thing but *truth* in the actions, and words and manners of those around them. They are quick to discover any attempt to convey a false impression, to appear higher, or richer, or better, than the actual fact, or to assume a tone different from what they ordinarily witness. And if they detect this, they will naturally conclude that there may be a company-face and a home-face, — company-manners and home-manners, — and thus they imbibe the principle of insincerity and affectation.

We render an essential service to the deportment, and even to the character, of our children by encouraging them to appear *as they are*, — to all persons, and on all occasions. If a friend visits us in the morning, and kindly wishes to see our little ones, it is better that they should run down in their simple dress, than that their nurse should put on their best frocks and arrange their toilet with her utmost skill.

For the same reason, if they are surprised in their garden or play-room, they should be taught to come forward, without hesitation or

reserve, and meet an unexpected visitor, whoever he may be, with the ingenuousness and freedom which are the best earnest of good manners, and the best intimation of good feeling.

These are trifles; but it is in trifles that the principle of which we have been speaking is developed. And if we view these things with reference to the formation of mind, or even the impression that they make on others, they are *not* trifles. They give indication of character, and again, as has been said, act upon character; and maintain the tone of which they are the result.

Those who disregard trifles should consider how much the opinion of others, and consequently our influence over them, is determined by what they see of us in trivial matters. It may be, that an estimate so formed is not altogether accurate; nevertheless, actions, great or small, are, even more perhaps than we imagine, the index of the internal frame. Do some acute observers read character at a glance, — do they see it in the stroke of a pen, — in the gestures of the body, — in the arrangement of a room or a toilet? We may

smile at the magic power which from such slight indications reads the mind ; but in all probability the inference is correct. The physiologist determines genus and species from the vertebræ of a back—lays bone to bone, and sinew to sinew, and designs the picture of an animal unknown to postdiluvian zoology ;—why may not the moral anatomist *complete* a portrait from a few features, and from one or two distinctive traits draw the whole character ?

The ripen our experience, the more shall we be convinced that the rules of good taste are little more than the principles of Christianity expanded and applied to minor points. Christianity and good taste are, at all events, strictly congenial. But religious persons, especially in the early days of their profession, are sometimes so intent upon the one great object, that they overlook the minor details, even though these may have an especial bearing upon what they have so much at heart.

As Christians advance, however, they take a more comprehensive view, and often lament the mistakes they made, when they acted more from impulse and less from judgment, and pur-

sued a line of conduct which in some respects their riper feeling disapproves. They know that, though for such faults religion is in no ways responsible, yet that they do Christianity a disservice when they exhibit it in an univiting aspect. And therefore they would warn the young against the errors we have been instancing, and themselves endeavour to realise the *beauty* of holiness, — and by external graces, as well as by higher attainments, to “win souls to Christ.”

CHAPTER XI.

BENEVOLENCE.

ONE of the most striking proofs to a reflective mind of the Divine benevolence is the fact that even evil is made subservient to the development of what is good; and that, much as there is of the former in the world, we can never see it without being able to point out the counter-acting remedy. It would seem as if the principle which originated redemption were made to apply universally; and, in some cases, so coincident is the antidote with the mischief, that it almost arises out of it. Thus it often is when the evil is merely natural, and when the will of an intelligent agent is not concerned. We then find what we call the laws of nature producing such reciprocity of action, that the mischief which we deplore becomes itself a benefit; and that which seems to threaten disorder

and dissolution acts as a remedy to pre-existent disease.

When, however, we turn to the consideration of moral evil, we cannot, in the same manner, see good as its consequence. On the contrary, evil generates evil in the subject of it; and *that* to infinity. Yet, although the mischief which is produced by the depraved will of a responsible being, far from being its own cure, is a prolific source of misery and wrong, yet even this may be made subservient to the developement of excellence in others, and to the bringing into play of virtues, which have for their end the correction of what is evil.

Christianity is altogether a remedial system; and it is remarkable that the highest Christian graces are brought into exercise by collision with moral evil. The supernatural fortitude of the early believers was called forth by the cruelty of Pagan persecution: humility is put to the severest trial, and appears in its fairest light, when exposed to the reproach and contumely of ungodly men; and gentleness, patience, forbearance, — each one of the blessed fruits of the Spirit's operation, — can scarcely be exhibited in

matured perfection, unless some contrary quality gives occasion for its exercise.

Thus it is, that sin, the great moral mischief, is made subservient not merely to the exhibition of the Divine perfections, but even to the development of those godlike graces with which the Spirit imbues the subjects of his influence. And in this sense it may work its own remedy; for even where virtue does not *directly* bear upon the spiritual disease, as an antidote or preventative, there is no external application more effectual to correct it than a contact with goodness. And thus the effect of an exhibition of Christian graces, in collision with moral evil, is, in a degree, similar to that of a revelation of the character of God, in its actings towards sin and sinners. The fuller the display, the more powerful is the appeal which such a manifestation makes to the understanding and the heart.

Of all graces, that which seems to bear the nearest relationship to the Divine character is Christian benevolence. Benevolence — in the abstract — the will to do good — is our primary idea of God, in reference to all his creatures.

Benevolence, in an extended sense, — the will to remedy evil, — is fully exemplified in the revelation of God, as the Saviour of sinners. It is in this, its secondary, rather than in its primary acceptation, that benevolence exists as a human virtue : for evil is so predominant in the world, that the will to do good in a human instrument almost resolves itself into a desire to correct or alleviate evil.

And it operates with reference both to natural and spiritual mischief. As it respects the relief of temporal evil, there may be found the remains of a principle of kindness inherent in us, which the corruption of the will has not in all cases destroyed. For in some, in whom there is no indication of Christian motive, — in some, who know not the name of Christ, — there exists a tenderness of heart, that sympathises with, and would remove, calamity. Still, there are exhibited in others, even in the most civilised, such hard-heartedness and cruelty, that by the sight or the report of such sad examples, we seem driven to the conclusion, that benevolence, even in its restricted sense, finds but small place naturally in the human breast.

In whatever degree, however, it may or may not exist in the original soil, it becomes a permanent and efficient principle only in that which bears the impress of Divine grace. It is the Christian, whose ear is open to the cry of the travailing creation, — who hears in the moan of disease, in the plaint of deserted infancy, in the mute voice of the oppressed animal, an appeal not merely to commiserate, but to relieve. For to the Christian the sight of evil recalls its cause. Pain, sickness, death, are but remembrancers of sin. Sin produced — sin perpetuates evil. The contemplation of the consequence of sin involves self-reproach, — it involves, too, a recollection of all that God has done to remedy sin, and of all the motives which lead to the love of him, and of his creatures.

And if the benevolence that relieves natural and inevitable evil is of Christian growth, much more is that which endeavours to remedy spiritual evil. There is no doubt a recognition, almost universal, of the necessity of correcting vice; and there are made, sometimes for moral amelioration, strenuous efforts, which have not

their rise in religion. But Christianity alone clearly defines wherein spiritual evil consists, what it is, and what is its exceeding mischief. And by restoring the soul to its legitimate ambition, — that of being like God, — it furnishes a perpetual excitement to the practice of a grace, which in its full developement is an essential perfection of Deity, in his relation to a redeemed world.

The heart of the Christian is made tender. It sympathises with suffering of all kinds. It may be, that Christians reflect more seriously than others, — that they are habituated to inquire, with reference to every subject, what are their own concern and duty in it. And therefore, when they see distress or calamity, they do not drive it from their thoughts, but feel that they are themselves, in some degree, responsible for its relief. And from the very habit of relieving distress, they become more susceptible of compassion. The exercise of benevolence, far from rendering us indifferent to the sufferings of others from the familiarity with them which it induces, quickens the tenderness of our hearts. We do not indeed pass through life, as

the world would say, the easier for this. The careless, the trifling, have the same scenes of distress presented to them; but they do not heed them, — they “pass by on the other side.” Christians, on the contrary, can scarcely leave their home, without having their hearts wounded by spectacles of evil and of woe. Are we in the country? Even in the lovely scenes of creation; amid the freshness, and the bloom, and the repose of a summer’s landscape; is there not still a blot that mars God’s handiwork, — a sound of distress, — a suffering animal, — or, what is worse, *sin*, — sin, the universal curse, — sin, that in cruelty, or in anger, or in some rude form of moral degradation, wrings from us the sigh of pity, and the ejaculation of shame and sorrow? And in more frequented resorts, in the abodes of a populous city, in the streets of our great metropolis, what misery, evil, and sin, do we not see on every side? Does their frequency steel our hearts? Surely not! Rather it leads us to deeper and clearer views of the original of the mischief, and to more intense desires to be ourselves instrumental in applying the only remedy.

Nevertheless, it is of importance at once to encourage, and to discipline the impulse; — to encourage it, — for natural indolence, and worldly prudence, are perpetual checks to its becoming effective; and to discipline it, — for otherwise it may effervesce in mere sensibility, and subside into indifference. The impulse to benevolence is strong in young Christians: it is strong in the same way that every spiritual desire is strong, but seductives, alas! are but too frequently, and too successfully, applied.

The impulse to benevolence is also strong in childhood. In a child awakened to Christian motives, the susceptibility of compassion is a delightful feature. Watch the movements of such a child: how the little heart melts at the sight of poverty, swells at oppression; and, if the conscience be tender, grieves over sin! Careful should we be, that the withering whisper of selfishness blast not the generous impulse. It should expand in its early prime; and bear fruit, even in its vernal freshness; for here there is no fear of a precocious budding. The flowers, however early, give promise of a first, second, and third harvest; and if crop after

crop succeed, each watered by the dew from heaven, each richer and heavier than the other, all will at last be gathered in,—having left behind them a seed, — and will be stored up, as a sure possession, amongst the sheaves of God's garner.

It is important, however, to guide, as well as encourage, the impulse to sympathise with distress. Misdirection, or false indulgence, may effect results not very different from those which discouragement produces. False sensibility should be as much guarded against as want of feeling, for the one usually terminates in the other. It is therefore wrong to nurse any sentiment which spends itself in words, — much more so to allow a display of sympathy greater than what is actually experienced. In the susceptibility of early life, a morbid state of feeling may be induced, which, whilst it evaporates in lamentation, indisposes to serious effort. Every sight and scene of distress, every pathetic tale, excites a movement. Sighs and tears are at command; but "alas !" it is said, " what can we do? we are so weak, so sensitive, so much overcome by scenes of distress." And what does such sensibility end in? In banishing from the thoughts

whatever occasions pain, and causing us to sit at ease amid our own comforts.

Now, as in the estimation of Christians, sin is, in itself, the greatest evil, as well as the cause of every evil, so the first object of the benevolence of Christians must be to co-operate in the Divine plan for the remedy of spiritual mischief. And thus, in this respect also,—that its aim is precise and definitive,—Christian benevolence differs from the desire for moral amelioration which worldly wisdom dictates. Christians are enlightened so as to detect at once the presence of spiritual evil. They see it where mere prudence does not see it; they see it in every symptom of alienation from God; and therefore their object is, to lessen the separation, and facilitate the approach to the fountain of all good.

Christian philanthropy is founded on Christian faith. Having itself found access to God, its aim is to point the way—to enlighten in order to convert. It does not inquire whether the idolater of the East be on a par in morals with the nominal Christian; whether some who are ignorant of Christ may not be more

generous, or more faithful, or more honest, than others who are better instructed; — but, it knows that, without God, there is no spiritual good, and without Christ no approach to God. And therefore it feels, that its work and prayer ought to be, to bring God in Christ near to all. Its scope is unbounded as the Divine purpose of mercy, and its object is the same.

In the furtherance of this end, no Christian woman can be uninterested. She may question her capacity to be of service, or her suitableness for any particular undertaking; but she cannot but acknowledge the claim which the great object of Christian philanthropy has upon her. There are also some special reasons, which render the exercise of benevolence appropriate to the sex, and peculiarly incumbent upon it. These are derived from the character, and from the circumstances of woman.

Tenderness of heart is a grace which we expect to find in her. We say of one who is deficient in it, that she is *unnatural*, — an alien from her sex. And this quality is understood to be independent of education or external circumstance. It is a part of *woman*: — woman, — the

nurse of sickness, the helper of infirmity. As she was formed, so is she fitted, to be an *help meet*. Help was little needed, until sin brought pain; but now it is the office of woman to alleviate the evil which she was the first to introduce. And therefore tenderness and sympathy ought to be her characteristics. It is hers to weep with those that weep.

It is a stigma on the Spanish ladies that they look with complacency on the arena of the bull-fight, and smile at the cruelties of the matador. It is a blemish on their beauty, for it renders them an exception to their sex in one of its most winning features. The tender look, the gracious mien, the gentle touch, belong to woman. Her heart should be open to the appeal of distress, and her hand ready to relieve it.

Among the motives which address themselves to woman, and which are calculated to excite and foster in her a desire to alleviate evil, her own liability to suffering is not the least. Her familiarity with pain, teaches her to feel for, and seek to assuage it; the dejection of spirit which her position, and perhaps her tempera-

ment, may entail, inclines her to sympathise with the afflicted; and she, who knows what it is to mourn in secret, will be disposed to commiserate and to succour those who have their portion here in sorrow. But if sympathy with temporal ill be almost innate in her, much more should she be alive to spiritual evil. Compassion, it has been said, has no object so urgent for its exercise as sin; and assuredly none which speaks so home to the breast of a Christian *woman*. Her heart will bleed when she looks on animal pain; but sin, from its nature, its consequences, and especially from the recollections which it ought to excite in her who was *first* in the transgression, demands her commiseration in a still higher degree.

The ordinary circumstances, also, in which woman is placed, seem to point her out as the most suitable agent in many benevolent designs. She enjoys a leisure which is seldom granted to the other sex. In what way can she employ it so well as in relieving the ills of her fellow creatures, and in being the almoner of those who must themselves labour to supply her store? In the way of business and pro-

fession, most men are necessarily of service to their species; utility and beneficence are often their calling:—but it is for woman to do good gratuitously, and to improve the indulgence she enjoys, not for her own pleasure only, but for purposes of practical and enlarged benevolence.

But then the question occurs, in what manner can she render herself thus useful; what field of benevolence is open to her, which is not uncongenial to her character, and which lies within her capabilities? This is a point which it is of importance to determine. The desire of doing good is, not unfrequently, ineffective, because no specific mode of accomplishing it is pointed out. We may entertain a conviction of the duty of benevolence, and a wish to be ourselves participators in its functions; but because we never place these *tangibly* before us, — because we do not fix upon any one purpose, and say, “let us *ourselves*, in our own persons, accomplish *this*,” — our philanthropy transpires in desires and designs; and even these decrease in ardour and sincerity. If we would be really charitable, it is not enough that we should open our purses, should appoint

and liberally supply an almoner. Our individual exertions are the effectual means, both of doing good to others, and of bringing back a blessing on ourselves. For as the immediate contact with good, as has been before observed, is the most efficient remedy for evil; so the personal observation of the evil which it is our object to counteract and remedy, is the most powerful excitement to Christian benevolence.

It must be allowed that this is a day of philanthropic effort, and that women particularly have responded to the appeal which religion has made in behalf of want. It is a day, we would hope, of religious improvement; and one evidence of its being so is the unceasing efforts that are made to communicate the blessings of Christianity to those who are without them. The very fact, however, that women have done so much, proves that they may do more. They have shown their aptitude, and their capability; — they have begun to labour, and they have already reaped some fruits. But these are only the earnest. An increase of hands, a concentration of efforts, an application of energy to specific and appropriate

objects, may render female exertion a successful agency in the correction of that moral evil which is the pain and grief of every genuine philanthropist.

It is, however, indispensable that the agent be suited to the work assigned. If this is not the case, the end will be impeded rather than advanced. Irregular efforts, in improper spheres, and by unqualified persons, excite a prejudice against female exertion generally, and often raise a barrier to the success of well ordered undertakings.

One of the most obvious offices of benevolence is that of visiting the destitute and sick; and it is one for which women must be considered, in some respects, as peculiarly qualified. Their kindness of address, their gentleness of manner, their winning tones of voice, may find acceptance where the more decisive manners of the other sex would procure a less courteous welcome; and these recommendations often more than compensate for their want of authority and physical strength. In times of sickness, a woman has natural and easy access. She has a remedy to propose, or a comfort

to administer; and as she soothes the pillow of the suffering and the dying, she may gently probe the wounds of conscience with the spiritual sword, and then pour into them the "oil and wine" of Christian consolation.

There are situations where this duty involves but little personal sacrifice. Amongst a rural population, where the hamlet lies in some sequestered glen, and in our way thither we drink in the pure breezes of the park or of the down;—where the cottage itself is clean, if not picturesque, and its inhabitants welcome our approach with the honest smile of simple hospitality;—there, we may well say, it is a pleasure to lift the latch, and to communicate to those who, at least, are willing to listen, that instruction which is the most valuable for them to receive. We may meet here, it is true, with ignorance and sin; we may find sickness and sorrow; and to conflict with, and reprove the former, or to seek contact with the latter, involves an effort. But it is not one from which human nature recoils, as it does from scenes of unmitigated evil; and there are refreshments, in the occupation itself, which,

even at the time, compensate for the sacrifice of time and ease.

It is not so, however, when a similar office leads us, not to the quiet village, but to the alleys of a densely populated city. Here we must be prepared to meet what benevolence alone can teach us to encounter. Those who pass only through the spacious streets and squares of the metropolis, — who visit no abodes but those of the wealthy, who give of their abundance through the instrumentality of others, — know by hearing only of poverty and destitution, and have little idea of the realities of want. Could they see the picture which a London court presents, — the infant swarm, issuing from its garrets or its cellars, whose countenances bespeak misery, and whose accents tell of sin; could they see the denuded walls, where a fellow creature pines in sickness, the straw pallet where, perhaps, a poor woman meets the hour of her anguish and gives birth to a child of want and sorrow, — they would feel almost a compunction in the enjoyment of their own luxuries, and would sincerely desire to afford relief.

It may, indeed, be asked, whether scenes such as these are a fitting spectacle for any woman; whether a sphere so arduous is at all suited for female enterprise. We allow that, universally, it is not. It is not one in which very young women can embark; for it requires experience, firmness, and qualifications which belong only to maturer years. The delicate in health are equally unfit; and, as domestic duties have a prior claim to any foreign efforts, there are many whom these will not allow to extend their active labours beyond their own homes.

Nevertheless, some still remain whom these exceptions do not touch; to whom nothing seems wanting, but the assignment of a specific object, and the resolution to carry it through.

Such resolution is indispensable. None can be effective labourers whom slight obstacles will discourage; whom a long walk, or a feeling of fatigue, or the sight of unpleasant, or even of disgusting objects is sufficient to deter; none who, in the subjects of their charity, seek such as require a small expenditure of effort on their part.

But amongst those in whom the love of Christ is a constraining motive, and who are ready

both to endure and to labour for his sake, there may be found, perhaps not a few, whom age, authority, health, and courage render fitting agents for one portion at least of the work of benevolence.

And their kind promptitude may be improved to good purpose. Assuredly, the scenes which city poverty presents are not such as would by choice be selected for the delicate eye and tender heart of any woman. And true it is, that amongst the admirable persons of whom we speak, many there are, who, in their ordinary habits, are familiar only with elegance and comfort ; but their seeming unfitness renders them, in some respects, even the more fit. Their appearance and manner, like the garb of the *Sœurs de la Charité*, are their passports ; and as they pass through streets where destitution only meets the eye, their deportment bespeaks their embassy, and inspires respect. They seem to spread better influences, and to appear as the happy harbingers of improvement.

And, in their visits to the interior of the abodes of want, do they not appear themselves valuable coadjutors in all the designs of

Christian benevolence? Are they not often successful in persuading to habits of moral amendment? Do they not adorn many a walk of religious usefulness? Who so fit as they to persuade the adults to seek the House of God,—to draw the infants to school—to disseminate the Scriptures, — to awaken in the ignorant and the perishing poor a desire for the word of life?

The eyes of Christians have of late been opened to the spiritual destitution of our large towns. Benevolence has made its first efforts: its pioneers have broken ground. But they have done little more. They have brought the torch, and exhibited the darkness. They have proved that the present supply of moral agency is quite inadequate to the need.

Is it not then possible to bring, as a subsidiary assistance, the piety and zeal of women; — to concentrate, more than has yet been done, the desultory efforts of such as are already stirred up to the work, and to excite others who are ready to respond to the only constraining motive? *

* See Southey's *Colloquies*, vol. ii. p. 227. The Authoress gladly avails herself of this distinguished authority: and trusts that Mr. Southey's honoured name will at once shelter and recommend the measure which she pleads for.

It is allowed, that, as in the selection, so in the employment of female agents, great discretion is necessary. Their sphere, of course, must be limited; there are places where they may not go, and dangers which they must not encounter. The ill consequences that, without such caution, might ensue, are obvious. It is with no view of recommending to enterprises unsuitable or perilous, of encouraging an ardour which overlooks real obstacles, and, least of all, of prompting to efforts which may justly be deemed intrusive or interfering, that these suggestions are thrown out. The energies of women, there can be little doubt, may be rendered efficient to good purpose,—but they can only be so when wisely ordered; when they are directed by persons of superior judgment, and receive the sanction of duly authorised guides.

The scruples which naturally arise as to the propriety of female exertion will be satisfied by an adherence to these limitations. And those who are awake to the evils which Christian benevolence would remedy, and feel themselves, in some measure, responsible for their correction, will rejoice if they can safely call in an aid,

which, if not the most effective, may still be not altogether unworthy acceptance.

The present state of society encourages the hope that benevolent efforts will be extended far beyond the limit they have hitherto reached. It must be regarded a favourable symptom for any cause when its progress may be traced in the higher ranks; and Christians on this principle augur well for the advance which religion has recently made. However they grieve over the ignorance and sin that still cross their path, they hail with joy the increasing love for the truth, which pervades the intelligent and the influential. And, if the dawn of light may thus be marked in every neighbourhood;—if, in the circle of our individual acquaintance, amongst former associates, of whom for a time we have lost sight, we hear of daily accessions to the cause of godliness, how greatly must such an increase of spiritual religion tell in favour of the power which may be called forth in the cause of Christian philanthropy! How many women, whose hearts have been kindled at the altar of the sanctuary, are ready to assist in the labour of love, and would gladly co-operate in

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any manner in which they might really promote the spiritual good of others ! Their aggregate power, wisely and duly ordered, might be brought to bear upon the mass of moral evil ; and might be made, in some measure, instrumental in forwarding an improvement, which has been too long regarded as almost hopeless.

These Christian ladies are already, probably, the benefactresses of their neighbourhood. In their country places they are to be seen in the cottage and the school, comforting the distressed, administering to the sick, and teaching the young. Still, there remains a work to be effected, — not indeed so agreeable, — not so easy, — not, perhaps, so suitable ; but in which more possibly might engage than have yet entered upon it, and might render a more important benefit to society than they have ever yet done. For, let us not forget, that within a few yards of the aristocratic squares — the seemingly exclusive abode of the noble and the wealthy, are to be found claims more urgent than any we have yet relieved, destitution such as we have pro-

bably never witnessed, ignorance and sin which cry aloud for help.

Let it not be said that the case is hopeless. Arduous indeed must be every undertaking that has for its object the relief of an evil so preponderating. But before Christian energy the "mountain becomes a plain." And whilst it is only as subsidiary agents that Christian ladies can enter on the field, — whilst it is only, as has been said, under restrictions that they can at all embark in it, — still those who are competent will, by co-operation in this self-denying work of Christian charity, have the satisfaction of feeling that their residence in town is no longer unprofitable, and that it brings with it duties as urgent and important as their country life.

Combined effort greatly facilitates benevolent undertakings. We must work together to do the most good. The independent and isolated attempts of individuals, however zealous, are, comparatively speaking, aimless and ineffective. They are, at best, but a drop in the ocean. Besides it is these, of which the prudence may well be questioned when entered on

by women. Solitary enterprises may expose to perils; and, at most, can be undertaken only by the very few, whose philanthropy, like that of the female Howard of our own day, is not subjected to ordinary rules. Societies, on the contrary, economise and direct their force, and in the division of their labour adapt their agents to the functions required of them. Women may avail themselves of this passport. Under the protection and conduct of a well-organised society, — sanctioned by ministerial cognisance, and accompanied by other associates, they need not shrink from their share of responsibility, nor will they incur the charge of temerity or misguidance.

The appeal to co-operate is made from many of their spiritual instructors. And if without ostentation, with the meekness which becomes the sex, and is indispensable in the subordinate agents of any society, more would respond — more of those whose leisure exceeds their engagements, and who in all other respects are suited to the work, — might it not be hoped that even *female* aid might, in some slight degree, forward that improvement, which all who are

zealous in the cause of religion, from the highest in spiritual office, to the humblest individual, are desirous to promote.

It requires, no doubt, some firmness to visit the poor in London, or in any large town; and it must be left to private judgment to decide on individual competency. Let none undertake such duty but those who are really equal to it. Still, it is an encouragement to know that of the excellent women, who have already entered on this Christian enterprise, not one has to complain of harm or insult. They have passed through the abodes of poverty, safe in the panoply of their own beneficent purpose, and if their appearance has excited surprise, it has called forth no rude or uncourteous remark.

Perhaps few instances of more disinterested moral courage are on record than that of Mrs. Fry on first visiting Newgate. The condition of her access was, that she should herself become a prisoner. From this she did not shrink. Alone and unguarded, she was voluntarily shut up where official functionaries hardly dared to trust themselves. She threw herself on the gratitude

of persons to whom fear was an insufficient restraint. She appealed to their better feelings, and was not disappointed.

But if she was the first to break the ground, her example has not been without imitation. Unpromising as the soil appeared, and unpromising to female culture, her appeal was not made in vain. Other labourers of her own sex have willingly shared with her the burthen of the day. They, like herself, are strong in faith and patience; fatigue and discouragement do not deter them from prosecuting their work of love; and, as they give up their days to a toilsome and anxious undertaking, and visit the cells of the guilty and condemned, their support is, that they are following, though afar off, the pattern of Him, whose last recorded act of beneficence on earth was, to save a malefactor.

Nor are there wanting in other more retiring walks of Christian benevolence, those who, like Priscilla, are fellow-helpers with the ministers of Christ. By their unpretending efforts, they all forward the great work of moral renovation. Those who, in the spirit of their Divine Master,

bestow their tender care on the lambs of the fold, disdain not to devote to elementary instruction talents fitted for a superior sphere, and unweariedly occupying their daily post, teach the infants of the poorest and most ignorant to lisp the name by which they may be saved,—these are, in truth, evincing the humble-mindedness, as well as the benevolence which characterise the genuine believer; and are casting their “bread upon the waters, which they shall find after many days.”

Many such there are, who, unknown to fame, prosecute their purposes of Christian love. They seek no notoriety; retiring in their manners, they may be familiar with few like-minded with themselves; but they are ever ready to be the instruments of good. Should the means of personal liberality be withheld from them, they give, what is more precious than money, their time and strength. They are the willing and judicious dispensers of the alms of the rich, and the messengers of mercy to the destitute. They are to be found, going from house to house, in the resorts of abject

poverty, amongst perhaps the poor emigrants from our sister isle—happy if they can shed a ray of comfort on the bed of sickness, or reclaim an erring child of sin, or direct the wanderer to that open door, from which no suppliant was ever turned away.

May the number of such increase! They are, it may be truly said, a national blessing. Do we grieve at the deficient morality of the lower classes, and desire to witness their improvement? And what means so likely to reclaim them, as bringing them into contact with goodness in the higher ranks? Are they told by those who would lead them astray, that their superiors are careless of their misery, that luxury and pride are the distinctions of the great, that the splendored equipage and the lordly palace eat up the provisions of the poor; and that the owners of such mock at their destitution?—What more obvious refutation of the calumny, than the interest and sympathy of which personal visitation is a pledge? The presence of a Christian lady is itself a check to sin; not only so, it is an expression of confidence, and an appeal to gratitude. And it is by calling forth what re-

mains of goodness, more than by coercing the corrupt principle; that permanent improvement may be looked for.

We are, it may be hoped, becoming daily more awakened to the duty of spreading the Gospel in foreign countries. We are feeling more and more deeply the responsibility which the enjoyment of spiritual light involves; shall we not then be the more solicitous to remove from our own land the reproach of ungodliness? Those Christian ladies especially, who contribute so liberally to the evangelisation of the remotest regions, and scruple not to send teachers even of their own sex to elevate and enlighten the women of the East, will not forget that there are missionary stations at their own doors. Here they may be themselves the labourers; here they may act, not by deputy, not in the way only of counsel, encouragement, and eleemosynary aid,—but personally and orally. Here they may themselves carry the blessing to many of their own sex, and see the work of moral renovation prosper in their hands.

When the excellent lady who first attempted female education amongst the Hindoo castes

made known the benevolent purpose which had brought her from her own country to the shores of the Carnatic, the wise men of the East expressed their sense of her mission in the following greeting:—"Lady, had you known *one* fact, you might have spared yourself so long a voyage, — the Hindoo women have no souls." Notwithstanding this taunt she persevered in her enterprise. She has practically refuted the prejudice against her sex ; and has received the thanks of those who welcomed her with scorn.

And thus it will ever be when benevolence perseveres ; and when, in spite of discouragement or worldly policy, Christian wisdom and energy prosecute what philanthropy designs. It may be truly said of such a zeal, that it tramples upon impossibilities. And it is no less blest to the exerciser of it, than to the subjects of its operation. The activity of a believer's mind, called forth as it has been by subjects of engrossing interest, needs a sphere in which it may expatiate. Christianity is so intellectual as well as so spiritual a repast, that powers which may have lain dormant are awakened in all who have been made

acquainted with its provisions. These faculties, when once roused, require employment. They become restless when not improved. Hence may result, impatience, extravagance, a looking out for excitement — all those faults and errors which disfigure religious profession, and which have been found most frequent amongst such as have not the corrective of active business. Occupation is the safety valve, through which exuberant zeal finds egress; and it is then condensed into an available and efficient power.

Experience verifies this assertion. Have we not, amongst the circle of our religious acquaintance, occasionally witnessed in some, symptoms of inconstancy and love of change? — Have we not watched with solicitude their path, fearful lest their ardour should be misdirected, and the very eagerness of their appetite should lead them into dangerous pastures? And have we not observed that the most effectual safeguard to such has been — the direction of their energies to active duties? Not only are their minds thus drawn off from curious speculations to schemes of practical usefulness, but they are taught the

importance and value of vital truth by observing its application to ordinary need; and thus they are strengthened in right views, they advance in humility, and they further by their influence, and by their practice, sober and true religion.

For the self-denying duties of active benevolence, no motive is sufficient but that of a grateful and filial affection towards God in Christ. The doing good to others is only the outward expression of the sentiment of Christian love,—that love which hopeth and endureth all things, and is the chief of spiritual graces.

Such benevolence is no mere holiday service. It involves details in every way trying to the bodily and mental frame. And it is well that we should bear this in mind; for if we have viewed benevolence only through the halo of poetry; if we have thought only of the pleasures of relieving distress, without laying our account for personal sacrifice; if we have been led to embark in the work of charity by a strong appeal to our compassion, or by the transient excitement which present distress may occasion,—we shall not be prepared for the offices

required of us. Mercy, with her cherub infants, is a lovely image, classically embellished; but the picturesque work of the chisel is a flattering likeness. It is mercy in Eden rather than mercy in a fallen world.

The outworks of charity are easy of access: the belonging to societies, the frequenting committees, the giving and soliciting pecuniary aid, are only the ministrations of the outer court. The offices of the inner temple are a higher service, and demand greater exertions. And those only are fitted, or are willing to engage in these, in whom the spirit of God has created a desire to be like the author of all good, and in whom the sense of mercies received has given rise to a well of gratitude that waters the heart, and makes it fruitful, not in the blossoms of profession, but in graces which are the product of Divine and perfect love.

To realise such a character is an object worthy ambition. It involves a participation in holy mysteries, — mysteries which knit together and assimilates those who receive them to their Priest and Head. The token of their fraternity, the evidence of their likeness is,

however, known and read of all. It consists in that "pure and undefiled service which visits the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and keeps the Christian unspotted from the world."

CHAPTER XII.

MARRIAGE.

WOMEN, there can be little doubt, are less independent of opinion than the other sex. That it should be so is only natural. Nevertheless, this feature in their character may operate to their prejudice; for it may direct their inquiries to the estimation in which things are held, not to their intrinsic worth; and lead them to ask how actions will be regarded, rather than whether they are right.

General opinion must help to form individual judgment. There is, however, independent of it, an internal standard of truth, which, if rightly formed, should be the criterion to regulate our decisions; and where there is reason to believe that the popular estimate is not accordant with this rule, the preference should certainly be given to the latter. When-

ever it is not so, we shall find reason to deplore our choice.

There is one event most important in its bearing on individual happiness, in relation to which, general opinion has, it may be feared, too considerable an influence. The prejudice in favour of the married rather than the unmarried state, as it respects woman, is great. No doubt the prepossession is not without reason; but it is, in many cases, excessive and unfair. It leads often to folly and to unhappiness, and disposes us to undervalue persons who may have the highest claim to admiration and esteem.

It is true, indeed, that every married woman must have been on some account, an object of preference; and the selection implies a compliment. But, though it may indicate individual partiality, it is by no means decisive as to the merits of the persons so favoured; and, as the choice says little in behalf of those on whom it falls, so neither does its absence argue any sort of inferiority. For, it is almost needless to say, that, in this respect, individual taste is very arbitrary; and that com-

siderations which have nothing to do with general excellence too often regulate the selection. Besides we all know that the fact of remaining single, may presuppose the not being easily won, as well as the not being sought; and it is only kind to believe, that, in the majority of cases, the former is the cause.

Without, however, further inquiring into the occasion of the prejudice in favour of marriage, we may only remark its existence, and infer its effects. These, on the whole, it must be allowed, are not favourable to female character. For, although to please the other sex is a legitimate ambition, and is a means of producing many of those graces which render women amiable, still, to make their preference a matter of first importance, and consider it as the end in view in all the early part of life, entails much disquietude, and is a hinderance rather than a stimulus to real improvement.

The evil may be traced in education. There can be little doubt but that the motive for the showy education, too much in vogue, is,—establishment in life. The profusion of accomplishments, the exclusive culture of whatever is

dazzling, the study of effect, — these all point to one aim, and look for their reward in the brilliancy of the nuptial alliance. Not that this is peculiar to modern times. The young woman of past centuries was, unquestionably, often trained with the same view, although the method of the discipline might have been different. But the misfortune is, not only that the motive is unworthy, but that the effects it produces are prejudicial. Those who are actuated by it bestow their care on the culture, not so much of the graces which render young women permanently agreeable, as of such fascinations as court observation, and attract notice at first sight. In so doing, they pay but a poor compliment to the discernment of the other sex. Nevertheless the course is so often successful in attaining the object at which it aims, that it is to be feared it will still have many followers. For whilst there is, probably, in the minds of most men, a conviction that external attractions, without more durable qualities, will contribute little towards domestic happiness, still there is so much influence in what meets the eye, that the preference

is often decided by it, rather than by what is more intrinsically valuable. And therefore, as beauty, the most successful of outward attractions, is an incommunicable gift, and where not granted, not to be obtained,—endeavour is made to compensate for its deficiency by some other brilliant decoration; and dress, manner, fashion, and accomplishment vie in their respective allurements.

It must be lamented when, for this competition merely, education is preparative, — when, instead of its being, as it should be considered, a discipline initiatory to *that* which is to be carried on through life, — and of which the object is to elevate mind to its highest capacity, and to fit the soul for its highest good, — it becomes a means only towards a single and a very subordinate end; an end which, however it may seem to involve important interests, will not, when so pursued, be likely to produce even present happiness.

And when this has been the object pursued, though at a distance, in very early life, it will not be lost sight of when the prospect of success is near. Then, indeed, it operates more

obviously, and more injuriously. For, if at all participated in by the young persons themselves, it diverts their minds from the most useful objects, and excites in them anxieties and tempers which are equally prejudicial to their character and peace.

It may seem strange that a motive which can never be avowed, — of which the influence has so often been ridiculed or gravely censured, should still be so frequently admitted, and have, in many cases, so obvious a sway.

Its prevalence does not appear restricted to any class. Take off the slight veil which propriety, or prudery, more or less scrupulously supplies, and it may be detected where its presence would scarcely be surmised. It is with mothers that the reproach chiefly rests. And although the too evident disclosure of the aim always excites a smile, — although it is a subject of satire in almost every popular fiction of the day, — it would seem as if the propensity were, in some cases, inveterate, and formed an essential part of maternal solicitude.

It may occasionally be discovered where certainly the parties ought to be superior to its in-

fluence, and where its detection brings discredit on the profession of religion otherwise maintained. It is here peculiarly objectionable; for, though religion itself is a bond of union, and often originates and cements another tie, no advantage should be taken of the intimacy it may sanction, for any selfish or secular purpose. If any society can be exempt from the manœuvring which is a reproach to our sex, it should assuredly be — religious society. In a great measure we may hope that it is so. — Still, it must be matter of regret, that there should not be the most marked superiority in this particular; and that, in circles where the highest principle in every thing ought to prevail, there should ever appear any of those exhibitions of worldly policy, which are censured where a less strict standard is avowed.

It may be amusing to by-standers to observe the working of the plan; the careful approximation of parties, the advantageous exhibition of whatever may be thought specially agreeable or attractive, the exclusion of inconvenient competition. But, though these little strokes of

diplomacy may do no more in their effect on observers than provoke a smile, they are much to be deprecated from the influence they have on those, on whose behalf they are contrived. There can scarcely, indeed, be a greater error than the encouragement in young persons, by action or by word, of the idea, that the avowed partiality of the other sex is necessary to happiness; or the allowing them to perceive, that their future establishment is a matter of solicitude to those who are their present guardians. If the general bias, as has been said, is so much in favour of the married state; if the flattering tribute of an avowed partiality, the pleasures of courtship, the appointments of a wedding, all present themselves before the minds of young women, and appear an agreeable termination to the vista of the next few years; the endeavours should be, to counteract, rather than favour the impression — to divert from its entertainment, — to remove to a distance, considerations which will too speedily force themselves, and to leave the mind unfettered and unembarrassed, during its few best days.

Otherwise it will be hindered in its progress,

and will be in danger of losing much of its energy. It will be apt to indulge in foolish speculations, or fancies unworthy of a transient thought. It may even become restless and solicitous; and, if not under due regulation, may contract dispositions obviously wrong.

Nor can it be doubted, that, when the ideas, to which allusion has been made, recur frequently to the thoughts, they prevent the suggestion of others far more profitable. They induce a discontent with home, a desire for excitement, a disinclination to apply to serious studies, — a vain and a trifling spirit.

On the contrary, where no encouragement is given to them, the manners are much more natural, and the mind is more free. There is no predisposition to feelings which, whenever entertained, will be engrossing; and which, under circumstances the most favourable, must produce some portion of disquietude. And there will be less danger of mistake as to the feelings themselves, less liability to a misconception of their nature, and less susceptibility of any extravagant or immoderate sentiment.

It will be allowed by all, that, whatever pre-

possession obtains in favour of marriage, that connexion bears too materially upon the whole complexion of after-life to be lightly entered upon. Still this conviction does not produce practically the caution which would seem only natural and necessary. And there is reason to believe that, in some cases, the only apology for such inconsiderateness is wanting. The sentiment which asserts its claim to wave ordinary considerations, does not exist, or at least what assumes its name is not the genuine feeling, and possesses neither its power nor its spell. It may be granted that true affection will plane many roughnesses; that not only does it overcome ordinary impediments, but that, when the tie is indissoluble, it reconciles to many a cross, and excuses many a failing. But the virtue it possesses, renders its presence the more indispensable; and enhances the danger of mistaking for it feelings which have no such efficacy.

Yet the prejudice of which we have been speaking, will almost, of itself, persuade to a step which affection only can justify. The language and forms of society, all tend to prove, and keep up, the impression in favour of the

married state. Marriage is a subject of congratulation, — the establishment of daughters is talked of, in worldly phrase, as a successful achievement, — the betrothed and the bride are treated with a consideration which is most flattering to those who are the subjects of it. And if these are only natural circumstances, arising out of the social state, still they operate in favour of the popular opinion, and will sometimes go far to persuade the existence of that sentiment, of which the reality is more than doubtful.

Besides, the avowal of preference by one of the other sex, or even the less explicit indication of it, may excite, in a woman, feelings which approximate to affection, — but which are not the genuine feeling, and will not stand the test of time. There is something amiable, indeed, in the sentiment thus engendered. It is not the result of vanity, which renders the coquette as desirous of homage, as she is indifferent to those who render it. It proceeds rather from a delicate and grateful mind ; which feels that affection is a choice and rare tribute ; and that, when freely

given, it ought at least to receive some return. Nevertheless the sentiment, if it proceeds no further, is not the love that will last a life, and therefore not *that* on which to risk the stake of happiness.

Again, the independence which marriage seems to offer, may be a temptation, and may dispose the heart to conceive itself under a more tender influence. This is altogether a delusion. Not only is the motive unworthy, and productive of present mistake, but it must lead to future disappointment. For if, in some lesser points, the married woman may be independent, in graver matters she is under authority; and even though the cord that leads her be the silken chain of love, still she has to make the sacrifice; — it is her's to follow; and “to be in all subjection.”

And can there be a doubt, that, when any inducement such as desire of the distinction and the privileges of a married woman, or, on the other hand, fear of the neglect implied in remaining single, is a principal ingredient in the sentiment that persuades to marriage, real affection has little to do with it? Yet the apprehen-

sion of never being invested with the bridal robe, may be an argument as effectual as the persuasives of the lover, and may succeed when the latter only would have failed. To this reluctance to be left out of the nuptial rolls may, perhaps, not wrongly, be ascribed unions, for which the capriciousness of female taste is scarcely a sufficient plea. It is said, with reference to marriage, that the later days of a woman's youth are more perilous to her prudence, than when beauty enjoys its bloom, and the feelings are in all their freshness. And if observation sometimes verifies this remark, even in persons whose judgment on other points is unquestioned, must we not consider the examples that occur, as concessions to the popular opinion, and as proofs, that minds of even a high order are not superior to a prejudice of general consent?

It is, therefore, the more important, to consider the alternative of happiness or unhappiness, which the married life presents; and to set the probability, or even the possibility, of the latter, against the too prevalent predilection.

A depreciation of married happiness, as it is

not consistent with truth, so neither is it the corrective of the bias which would lead, inconsiderately, to matrimony. It is rather by considering what the nuptial tie *ought* to be, than through fear of not realizing its felicity, that caution in contracting it will be induced.

And truly it may be said, that when, in the familiarities of domestic life, heart meets heart; in the pursuits of intellect and taste, mind responds to mind; in the breathings of the heaven-born nature, spirit joins with spirit—so that one heart, one mind, one spirit, is the true expression of a union so near, so sacred;—no dream of romance has ever exceeded the sober reality of the daily tasted, and daily increasing happiness. Chastened indeed it is—chastened by the infirmities of nature, by the changes and crosses of life; chastened by the dread which creeps into every present enjoyment lest the tie, for a time, be broken;—but, if it be so chastened, the love that knits hearts together is even the more intense. It is a love that survives changes, that bears with infirmities, that shrinks not from the valley of the shadow of death, but keeps itself chaste, for a more en-

during union. And those who have experienced it,—who, together, have encountered the “briars of this working-day world,” and have grown in tenderness as they have together suffered, as well as together rejoiced, will be very jealous of the *character* of married life; and will not allow the indifference in which some pass on together, to stand as the fair specimen of connubial fellowship.

Truly those are blessed, to whom long and intimate acquaintance has given an identity of feelings and of cares, — whose love is ripened into confidence; and to whom their very differences in character have been a mutual good. They are the examples of married bliss; and if their felicity may encourage others who, like them, are suited to be fellow travellers on the journey of life, let it also deter from such association, any, whose congeniality to each other is more doubtful. There is really no intermediate state, as it respects happiness, in marriage. The careless non-interference which may satisfy some, is *infelicity*;—for it is an absence of happiness,—and it is also a state of danger. The step is but small between luke-

warmness and alienation ; and if the interval be not passed, still how different is the dull endurance of each other's society from the ardour with which intercourse was once sought ; how inferior the permanent realization, with the anticipated and pledged enjoyment.

In spite of all that worldlymindedness may object, *love* is essential to nuptial happiness. Love is no mere dream of the poet or the novelist. It is no mere fancy of the undisciplined mind. In its truth, its reality, it is experienced only by the virtuous ; and the more elevated the character, the more pure, and the more deep, will be the affection.

Love, in minds of the highest order, is enduring. It is not speedily conceived. It is not taken up as the play of an idle hour ; the bubble that glitters and bursts in the sunbeam ; the caprice which may with impunity be indulged. Therefore love, in such minds, permanently affects happiness. It may be hard to secure it, — but it is even more difficult to lose it. It is a boon that, when once given, can scarcely be recalled. And though such love is rarely unworthily bestowed ; though instances

of ill-requital or disappointment are uncommon, — still, it is in such cases, when they do occur, that the barbed arrow rankles in the heart, and the wound that bleeds in secret exhausts the finest and the strongest minds.

Love, of this sort, is exclusive and individual. It is not the coquetry that smiles on every admirer, and that, if one votary fails, has others in reserve. It is the one chaste tribute of the heart; it cannot be either shared or transferred; it is the pledge of nuptial faith, and the earnest of nuptial endearment.

Such love is founded on esteem. *This* is its security; its guarantee against disappointment; its own internal witness of being genuine. It is not the admiration of personal form; the sentiment excited by the glitter of rank, equipage, or wealth, or induced merely by casual association; neither is it the wayward passion that sets aside restraint, and knows no reason but its own caprice. It is the preference which a virtuous mind gives to one whom it sees worthy of its choice, and to whom it feels specially drawn to, by the mysterious sympathy which kindred and congenial qualities call forth.

An affection of this nature is, it may be said, dependent on conditions, identical with the requisites for married happiness. If it is the exclusive property of a well-disciplined mind, it will scarcely be conceived, it will certainly not be indulged, except in the case of qualities which are a pledge of nuptial felicity. Similarity in some points, and suitability in others, as they ought to be the preliminaries to the entertaining of an attachment, so should they be to a matrimonial union.

Perhaps, the only point in which *absolute* similarity is essential is — the most important of all — religious principle. The magnitude of the interests involved in religion, is a sufficient reason for this simple and unconditional exception. And those who really believe its truths, and to whom, therefore, they are of incalculably greater moment than any other consideration, — to whom they are likewise subjects of such habitual reference, that there is no action or occurrence in which they are not involved, — such will surely not scruple to allow, that any disagreement upon these vital points should be regarded a sufficient disqualification in a tie so close. It is true, that

principle occasionally yields to the persuasives of love; that, in some cases, the apparent smallness of the difference—in others the more illusive, but perhaps the more prevailing, plea, the prospect of a beneficial influence, and the assurance so seldom, alas ! realized, that such sway must be effectual, has been urged too successfully. But the general result has been, *not* such as to favour the trial. It has been, with but few exceptions, what indeed, sound judgment would expect ; but what hope, founded on deceitful premises, ventured to contradict.

It should seem, however, impossible for any, who feel the importance of religion, and, at the same time, respect the intimacy of the marriage bond, to allow a doubt upon the subject. It is certainly impossible for those, who have experienced the blessing of entire community of thought and spirit, on the sentiment nearest their hearts, to suppose that happiness can be realized without it. Even on the lesser points of religious faith, unless there be unanimity, there will be little comfort. Other subjects admit of difference of opinion : politics have, without mischief, divided the domestic hearth :

but religion, unless it be regarded altogether with indifference — religion, in all particulars of belief, discipline, and conduct—should be of one complexion, and should, in its internal influence, cement a union, which it has hallowed by its sanction and its rites.

The greatest mystery of Christian faith is shadowed forth by this earthly tie : and, to the experience of those whose hearts are thus united, are addressed many of the most pathetic appeals of Divine tenderness. But if the connection be thus honoured ; if it be selected as the image of that sublime conjunction, of which the initial vows are the security of the affianced Church on earth, and the consummation will be her transcendent joy in her perfected state of glory ; it is a bond to be religiously and seriously contracted. And those who have chosen the same heavenward path, who prepare for similar conflicts, seek like consolations, and anticipate the same rest, — they truly are *fellow helpers*. Their association will be a mutual strength, and their union will be *for ever*. For they will look upon each other's faces before the throne of God ; they will recognize, even in the glorified

form, the features that were once so dear ; and even their perfected joy will be enhanced, by their companionship in bliss with the sharer of their earthly pilgrimage.

Religion is, of course, the guarantee for conduct. And it is happy when we are furnished with such a pledge. In spite of the faults which may blemish a sincere profession, and which Christians themselves deplore ; in spite, too, of the occasional fallacy of some pretensions ; the evidence which bespeaks religious principle, is satisfactorily presumptive of its practical fruits. Nevertheless, minor incidents are so influential in determining happiness ; and, in married life, there is such perpetual collision in these details ; that, unless, besides the indispensable agreement in one great point, there is congeniality in lesser particulars, much risk must still remain as to the felicity of the union.

There is moreover this danger, — that, while the *broad* features of individual difference are clearly marked, and strike even casual observers, the thousand *little* particulars of manners and habits appear only when familiarity takes off the veil, and discloses either the amiabilities or

the blemishes which distinguish character. Experience daily proves that frequent and even intimate social intercourse will not always ascertain points of essential importance in domestic life. Were this consideration, indeed, duly weighed, young persons would be more apt to hesitate, before they relinquished their parental home, even though it might be not quite a happy one;—before they exchanged a lot, of which they, at least, had felt the worst, for one, of whose discomforts they only know, that, whatever they may be, they are irremediable.

Without, however, dwelling on forebodings, which might, if indulged, effectually prevent the marriage union, it is right to be prepared for trials which few can escape. Differences of opinion, and of taste, and infirmities of temper, ought, in some measure, to be anticipated; and the duties of the marriage-state to be entered on, with the expectation that they will require concession and sacrifice. It is, nevertheless, prudent to be satisfied as to the general suitability of one, whose claim, henceforth, will be

so imperative; and to calculate, as far as may be, the probability of future adaptation.

Temper, whilst it has a very material bearing on the complexion of domestic life, is, perhaps, the most difficult point of any to ascertain. It is not always the apparently good-humoured, that have the most agreeable temper: neither the seemingly severe that are always most hard to please. Not unfrequently the latter are, to those they love, the most uniformly tender; and are less subject to caprice, than others who appear more indulgent. Without, however, any intention to deceive, the lover has the advantage of the most favourable light, and the slight annoyances which, in married intercourse, may produce irritation, occasion not the ruffling of the brow in the halcyon days of courtship.

Similar tempers are not always the most suitable. On the contrary, as attachment often springs up between persons of dissimilar dispositions, so the points in which they differ at times appear to suit them specially to each other. The sanguine is chastened by the sober; and again, the hopeful spirit cheers the more

anxious and desponding. A temper not easily disturbed allays the heat of one who is irritable, and if the easiness of the former borders on carelessness or indolence, it may be rendered more alert and scrupulous by the sensitiveness with which it is associated.

But some dispositions will scarcely coalesce. It has been remarked that vain persons fall foul of one another even in ordinary conversation. If the tendency be to a particular fault, a like failing will doubtless be but an indifferent corrective; and, if we lay our account for some imperfection, it will be wise to avoid *that*, at least, to which we are ourselves the most prone. Even, though the union of extreme contrasts appears unnatural, it gives, on the whole, a fairer promise of agreement than the collision of similar asperities.

The discernment which discovers from slight indications peculiarities of temper, is, therefore, a valuable gift; and should be improved to practical use. It will render young people cautious of unworthily bestowing their preference; and will set, in good season, the watch upon their hearts. For it is not, when the pledge is once given, that the

caution can be urged; nor is it, when partiality has closed the eye to all but recommendations, that judgment can be fairly exercised. The mistake irretrievably made, it remains only for love to excuse the faults, to which it once was blind.

The tastes and pursuits of married persons, must also, it is evident, be mutually of much importance. In these, similarity is, in some respects, desirable; suitability almost essential. Taste, in its extensive sense, has a reference to persons and to things; and, as has been before remarked, bears on almost every particular of conduct. It has so much to do with the minutiae of life, that, where tastes are wholly dissimilar, they must perpetually be offending one another.

A mutual preference seems, itself, a guarantee for similarity in taste. Still, it is sometimes difficult to conjecture what attraction can here draw together persons so little capable of sympathy. Perhaps it will be said, that such pairs are happier than might be expected. But if some licence be allowed for dissimilarity in matters of taste; if the coalition may even be, to an extent, mutually beneficial,—so that the fastidious become less critical,—the over-refined,

more simple, — the exclusive more liberal, by association with a counteracting bias, the difference should be in measure, rather than in kind; or at least there should be no jarring, even in the disagreement.

In the same way, total dissimilarity in pursuit must be a bar to enjoyment; on the ground that a participation in whatever interests and occupies, is a stimulus to affection, and an increase of social pleasure. A woman who has no relish for intellectual entertainments will assort but indifferently with a man of studious pursuits: and again, if the superiority be on the other side, — if the woman be possessed of an enlarged and cultivated mind, — she will find the mere idler, the unprofitable spendthrift of what she considers the most valuable talent, a very unsuitable companion.

A certain diversity in married persons is intended by nature, and is favourable to mutual improvement. The sedentary student will be agreeably enlivened by his vivacious partner, if her vivacity be the expression of an intelligent mind; and the woman of elegant accomplishment will receive from the

superior sense, and more valuable attainments of her husband a higher tone, and will herself be stimulated to advance by her desire of assimilating herself to him.

And here it may be observed, that similarity of pursuit may possibly bring together persons otherwise unsuitable. There is a peculiar fascination in sympathy; and in ordinary social intercourse, if we find we have a point exclusively in common with any individual, the attraction has a peculiar force. It has not unfrequently been the basis of an attachment which ought to rest upon more general grounds. For it is not, because voices may blend well in a Duet, or the Flute harmonize the Piano-forte; because assistance may be acceptable in furnishing the mineralogical cabinet, or in accomplishing the pleasant labours of the Conservatory; because even the cottage or the school may be visited with mutual interest,—that there is a promise of harmony for life or an assurance of congeniality on points involving daily interests. Inquiry, therefore, should be directed far more to accordance of character than to similarity upon special points;

for the latter will not compensate for any deficiency in the former, and is, at best, but an agreeable adjunct.

Besides accordance of mind and disposition, there are also some external circumstances, in which suitability is, by no means, unimportant. A marked difference in station, especially if the superiority be on the female side, is rarely a happy incident in the marriage lot. However individual preference may overlook such distinction, and plead for its non-observance, it is not the part of wisdom to disregard it. Neither is it Christian prudence, to use religion as an apology for connections, which, otherwise, would not be thought of. A young woman, if she is religious, should be the more careful to avoid even the shadow of offence, and to prove that her standard of propriety is higher, and more strict than that of the world. For, in some respects certainly, she is exposed to peculiar danger. Her life is quiet, and she is therefore more susceptible of tender and enduring feeling. Her affections are called forth, and, on the subject which chiefly engrosses

them, she is particularly accessible to sympathy. Her circle is circumscribed ; and she is brought into nearer intercourse with those who compose it, than others whose acquaintance is more general. Nor can it be denied, that religion authorises a kindliness between different ranks, which breaks down the barriers of caste, erected by worldly pride or fashion. This may be,—and rightly ; — but still the Christian should never for a moment swerve from that delicate decorum which marks correct taste and sound principle. She should never, in a point of such nice honour as marriage, occasion regret to her best friends, or make them feel that she has not done credit to her religious profession. She should consider that her conduct, in this particular, is one of the most decisive tests, by which the world tries her ; and that it will grant her only this indulgence, — that it will judge her, by her own avowed standard.

It is also important to a well-assorted marriage, that the balance of nature be preserved, and that the degree of superiority, incident to the higher sex, should obtain in the matrimonial

connection. This rule can rarely be infringed without mischief. Manifest superiority in a woman, either produces in her a feeling of disrespect towards him with whom she is associated, destructive of the reverence essential to female love; or, at least, creates a suspicion, that such want of reverence is entertained. Especially when the superiority is in those mental qualities in which the manly vigour ought to be evinced; — if, in spite of this disproportion, in some instances, the unsuitability is not apparent, it must be the result of great good sense on the one hand, or of great good temper on the other.

Again, if inferiority, not subordination, characterize the female side, the balance is equally destroyed, and the probability of happiness still more doubtful. For the affection which will render married life happy, is not the passing admiration of a pretty face, but the esteem which cherishes because it respects, and grows because it discovers intrinsic qualities to value.

It may be remarked, that if marriage is to both parties a risk, it is especially so to a

woman; and peculiarly to a virtuous and religious woman. In one sense, indeed, the higher her tone of feeling, the better regulated her character; the greater the hazard. For, though a woman of superior mind is enabled to encounter trial, and even to rise above it; though she can often smooth asperities, and so use her influence, as to prevent and cure domestic discomfort; still, she is far more alive to the sorrows arising from matrimonial uncongeniality, than one of a less fine mould. She knows, that her duty lies in submission; that it becomes her not to oppose, rarely to remonstrate; that whilst she secretly deploras the causes of her sorrow, she must lock them up in her own bosom, and patiently endure what she cannot remedy. Indifference cannot be her refuge; neither can she seek, in company and diversion, to forget or to avoid her home; she must either be herself the soul and the solace of married life, or the victim of conjugal unhappiness.

These are serious reflections; but they are therefore the more necessary to be presented to the mind. They should, at least, counteract

any undue bias in favour of marriage, and strengthen the conviction that, if the union be not congenial, no motive of an extrinsic nature should persuade to it. For, as it is the part of woman to adapt herself to her husband, let her ascertain, whilst still she is at liberty, that such conformity will be easy to her; that his opinions are generally of the same tone with hers; that his temper is suitable to her; that his pursuits are not distasteful to her: and, above all, that his affection is, for *herself*;—having the permanency of a principle, rather than the transitoriness of a passion, based upon acquaintance with her character, and upon suitable qualities in his own. For such an attachment, when really conceived, a woman can scarcely be too grateful. It is the offering of a virtuous heart, — a tribute willingly rendered to the object of its preference; it is the link appointed by the Author of all good, to bind together the twin souls, which He has formed for union. Surely it may be said that such sympathy is one of the choicest gifts of Heaven, — an influence, which, when it does bless the upward journey, is as an emanation from the

Fountain of bliss, and is a promise of a holier bond, when Love shall be perfected.

There can be no doubt but that a happy marriage improves a woman's character, and renders her more influential, and more useful. She is called, by it, to more important duties; she occupies a higher position, her interests are multiplied, and her cares diverted from herself. She finds also, in her husband, a guide, as well as a protector; an instructor, as well as a tender friend. She is relieved from much responsibility, at the same time that she is rendered more capable of encountering trial.

But, whatever may be the recommendations of the marriage state, it will be the fault of the unmarried if they do not employ their liberty and leisure to purposes of real good. It rests with themselves to avoid the failings to which their station in society may be prone, and the inconveniences which are the consequence of such defects. If they have wisely made their choice; if circumstances have not placed before them a promise of happiness in married life; or, if disappointment have crossed their path, and fair hopes, on the point of realization, have been

withered ; it is for them to seek their pleasure in the fulfilment of duty, and to win affection by benevolence and kindness. It must not be forgotten that there are advantages peculiar to single life ; that it affords an immunity from many cares, an opportunity for intellectual pursuits, a power to do good extensively, which married women may not enjoy. And if these privileges are improved ; if cheerfulness and benevolence characterize the temper ; there will be no want of occupation, of happiness, or of sympathy. The kind Sister, or Aunt, will be always welcomed ; — she will be hailed, as the agreeable companion — or the tender nurse ; as the participator in joy — or the sympathiser in sorrow ; as the helper in business — or the companion in affliction : she will be the ready assistant in every good work ; — the children will run to greet her arrival ; the poor will rise up, and call her blessed. And if, in truth, as we do see in some bright examples in our own day, her energy grows with her desire of doing good, and in the assiduous and pains-taking efforts of Christian charity, she seems to forget the weakness of her sex, she realizes, in one of

its most pleasing forms, primitive devotedness. In pious exercises more spiritual, in self-denial more mortified, in faith more pure, than any of the cloistered nuns of the strictest habit, still her religion is without superstition, and her sobriety without gloom. She is one of a holy sisterhood, whose order is truly catholic; whose vows are scriptural; and whose voluntary service is, the labour of love.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE YOUNG WIFE.

THERE is, perhaps, no period so critical in respect of subsequent happiness, as the early years of married life. Yet it is one in which there is often a want of due consideration on either side. Married persons frequently fall into each other's habits, or not, just as it may happen; and are scarcely aware, what foundation they are laying for future agreement or disunion; till they stop to inquire, whether they are, or are not, happy.

The predominant influence of one engrossing sentiment, accounts, in great measure, for this want of thought. As long as the feeling in question is new, the character does not enjoy its natural tone; and ordinary motives have not their usual sway. When it becomes habitual, it is then so identified with the very being, that

though an important spring of action, it does not interfere with other moral and intellectual movements.

Besides, however the potency of the sentiment of which we have been speaking, the change of relation that takes place on marriage, renders it not surprising that a woman should be less prepared to act upon matured reflection, than from immediate impulse : she finds herself left, in many respects, to her own guidance ; at the same time, suddenly invested with a new and paramount duty. She is placed in a more prominent station than any she has yet occupied ; and she must feel, that her course is not only untried, but doubtful ; and that many of the conditions that should regulate it, are unknown.

The change of relation in the person most important to herself, is that which probably chiefly startles her. She is not quite prepared for the difference between the lover and the husband. Not that the former character is necessarily put aside, because the other is assumed ; but the assumption of the latter confers authority, where before there was *only* deference. The change is external ; a change of circum-

stance, not an alteration in the individual. But the contrast is so great; and often so little realized beforehand; that it is not easy, for the party whom it most affects, to reconcile herself to it at once, and to persuade herself, that it is only natural and necessary.

The difference also appears just in those little points, which are perpetually occurring, and are therefore always, as it were, present. The days of attendance on a woman cease with the days of courtship; — at least, if they do not, it is a matter of indulgence, not of right. Her will, her caprice, are no longer absolute: whatever sway they have, is an indulgence; and often an indulgence that can *not* be yielded. She has ceased to be the regulator: her wishes must give place to more important interests; she cannot be the petted child, whose every conceit must be gratified at the most costly price.

A woman runs a risk of being spoilt by the flattering period that precedes marriage. She is, of necessity, then, a first object; and custom has added to the homage which love would willingly render. An individual of a family, who may before have been but little

considered, rises, at once, into importance ; and the person whom she most values is ready to execute the slightest expression of her will.

The contrast between this arbitrary power, and the obedience incurred by marriage, is the occasion often of disappointment ; and may produce more serious mischief. It is only prudent in a woman to prepare for the change ; and to remember, that when she promises submission, she abdicates supremacy.

The danger to a sensitive mind is, lest it should interpret the change of relation into a change of feeling ; and apprehend that there is a decrease of tenderness, because there may be some apparent diminution of attention. It is very important to happiness to discourage any such idea ; for it torments the mind with imaginary jealousies, and may produce a querulous discontent, which is always requiring to be soothed, and is a most troublesome ingredient in married life. The part of wisdom undoubtedly is, to dispense voluntarily with attentions which might be burthensome to the giver, and to render back in kind many that once were paid. There will be no loss sustained by such consi-

deration. Love, even after marriage, will be prompt to render every social courtesy: and the generous mind will be the more disposed to make a sacrifice, when the effort is not claimed. The wife should feel that, from the time she enters into the nuptial contract, her husband's gratification and convenience should be as much studied by her, as hers once were by him; and that in all the lesser matters which fall under her direction, she ought to provide for his comfort, and facilitate his arrangements.

The sooner that a woman can divest herself of any unreasonable expectations which the devotion of the lover may have excited, the greater the probability of her securing permanent attachment. Courtship is a dream, from which it is better to awake voluntarily than to be reluctantly roused. It is better to return to ordinary habits — to the sober and calm fulfilment of daily business, in the place assigned by duty — than to cherish an artificial excitement, and cling to a false position.

However tender a husband may be, and however genuine and constant his love, an excessive claim upon his time or attentions is, at least, a

dangerous experiment. It may alienate his affection ; but if not, — if allowed and complied with to its full extent, — the indulgence is by no means beneficial to either party. The wife is not the happier for the licence of her fancies, and her exactions render her love rather a burthen than a blessing. Her husband, in every day's detail, finds himself called on to sacrifice some duty or engagement; and is hampered and impeded, because he prefers yielding to this conjugal thralldom, to appearing, for a moment, unkind. But order cannot be reversed without mischief. Whether the trial to gain the ascendant be direct, or whether it be under the ingenious covert of an overwrought sensibility, it is equally impolitic, and, if successful, equally to be lamented. On one side or other, there must be concession, even between those who love; especially when the intercourse is perpetual: nor, as has been already said, can there be a doubt, in married life, where the concession ought to be. Though made, almost imperceptibly, — for the less display there is in submission or service of any sort, the more grateful will it be to the recipient,

—it should be not the less habitual; and, indeed, ought to be so much a matter of course, that the evenness of temper, and happiness of lot, which are the consequence of such subordination, should be the only indication of its exercise.

It is a proof of judgment in a woman, when she bestows attention on her husband's character; when she sets herself to study his peculiarities, and to consult them to the utmost of her power. This is the *management* which is not only allowable, but praiseworthy; for its object is, not the obtaining of sway, but the promotion of mutual felicity.

An inattention to these points will convert into faults what are merely characteristics: for it is in these *individualities* that there is the greatest sensitiveness; and, if they are perpetually offended, they will become morbidly irritable.

By the regard paid to them will the sincerity of attachment be estimated; and if they refer, as they often do, to minutiae of conduct, it is felt, that these are just the opportunities in which the wife may show her sense

of the more important services for which *she* is a debtor.

It has been remarked that, even in happy marriages, the first year is *not* to the wife the happiest. And it may well so be. Where there is love, there will, no doubt, be a mutual and an increasing conformity; and a complete knowledge of character will render adaptation more easy, and more successful. Such acquaintance will render a woman also more secure: she will have ascertained the extent of peculiarities, about which, at their first discovery, she may have felt some solicitude, and her own power of complying with, or regulating them. Thence confidence will be the result of experience, as well as of affection; and any apprehension she may have entertained, proceeding either from self-diffidence or from fear of unsuitability, will be set at rest.

A judicious influence will turn to good account peculiarities in temper. It will view them in the best light, and improve them to the best advantage. It will yield willingly and at once, when such concession is a duty; will soothe, when soothing may be attempted;

will stimulate and sympathize when zeal is laudable. And if there be infirmity, such an influence will be exercised with the happiest effect. Causes of irritation will be avoided; and, instead of exasperating by opposition, a wife, by compliance and sympathy, as far as they can be carried, will allay excitement, and, in the end, persuade.

There is no point so small, which, if it be a husband's fancy, is not worth attending to. Many persons, of superior mind, are precise in trifling arrangements. Individual comfort often depends on very little matters. It is for a woman to observe how far such things affect her husband; and, in dress, and in household appointments, as well as more important matters, if she can discover his preference, she should endeavour to gratify it, rather than to please herself. This is a small tribute of love; but it marks the sentiment as much as many a greater act.

The prominence, into which a young married woman is brought is often trying to her. And no one will be more interested in her social popularity than her husband. It is gratifying to

him to know that she is liked, especially by his own friends. With reference, indeed, to these, it will most likely be her wish as it is her duty, to endeavour to gain their esteem. She will not desire to separate her husband from them, or, in any way, to diminish his regard for them ; but, considering how valuable true friends are, will rather strengthen the bond, and will conciliate their interest for herself, as one identified with the object of their mutual affection. She will desire to adopt her husband's friends as her friends, and his family as her family ; and to render to his relations, according to their several claims, that duty and deference, which will make them feel that they have not lost, but gained, a member. The disposition in families ordinarily is to welcome, with kindness and with interest, the new claimant to their protection and love. It will, in most cases, be her own fault if that kindness diminishes. But, if she receives their advances with indifference ; if she so engrosses her husband, as to alienate him from ties that once were the nearest ; if, in hospitality, or in other little matters of attention, she shows a marked

preference to her own kindred ; if the counsel of her second parents, and the proffered love of the circle into which she has been engrafted, are evidently little valued, is it surprising that favour on their parts should be withdrawn, or that it should even be converted into coldness and distrust ?

Even in society there is generally a prepossession in favour of a bride. She is viewed with indulgence, and with a disposition to discover her best features. But, there must not be, on her part, a carelessness of pleasing ; she must not, for a moment think, that, because she is married, the object in gaining good opinions is realized, and that she need no longer seek to conciliate. A married woman has certainly stronger motives than another to render her desirous to please. Not only will her husband be gratified by the approbation bestowed upon his choice, but as he is in a manner identified with her, she, by her own conduct and manners, either gains or loses suffrages for him. She should, therefore, consider that now is the critical time, when she may strengthen a favourable impression ; when, as she will pro-

bably be thrown in a new sphere, she may fix herself in the esteem of others. She must not content herself with inanimately occupying her place; with exhibiting a graceful appearance or a faultless attire. Her manners should bespeak favour; she should enrich her conversation with whatever information she possesses, —not for display, but to aid in social entertainment; and she should bear her part with simplicity and kindness, neither presuming upon her new dignity, nor giving way to reserve.

Much judgment may be evinced by married women in their conformity to the station, whatever it be, to which their husbands' situation in society entitles them. There is *one* character, which the quiet graces of a woman peculiarly adorn —that of a clergyman's wife. And if any where, surely *here*, humbleness of mind, benevolence of spirit, affability of address, should be exemplified, and should characterize the honoured helpmate of ministerial labour. It is her's to introduce, or to accompany the sacred message with whatever may most suitably commend it; to gain the hearts of the tender

of the flock, and to win the ear of the aged and the sick ; to gather round her the willing helpers of her own sex, and to take the lead herself in active benevolence ; to be the ready friend of the unprotected, and the counsellor of those who need advice ; and, above all, to adorn herself, as the holy women of old, with the jewellery of the Christian casket, and to afford, in her own person, no unfair specimen of the result of principles with which domestic instruction must render her familiar.

It is not enough for a woman that she does not lose ground in her husband's esteem ; it should be her ambition to advance, more and more, in his good opinion. The sentiment with which those, whose attachment may be equally sincere, regard their wives, is very various ; and their conduct towards them proportionably different. A husband may exhibit towards his wife much tenderness, but may yet make but little account of her judgment ; or he may treat her with indulgence, but may entertain towards her but little deference ; or he may select her as the companion of his lighter hours, but, in his more thoughtful moods, may not seek her

society, nor allow her to participate in his weightier interests and more serious reflections. This will be very unsatisfactory to an attached partner, and would seem the result of unfitness in her to partake her husband's counsels. It arises ordinarily from a deficiency of those moral and mental qualities which, if they do not place woman on a level with the superior sex, fit her at least to be their associate. And it should be the endeavour of the wife to convince her husband, that she is worthy of his consideration; and that her endowments are such as not only entitle her to his love, but as may render her, even in cases of difficulty, perhaps a better counsellor to him, than any other guide.

An important feature in female character, and one of which the want is apt to be suspected, is energy. Energy of mind is essential to the achievement of any thing really great; and, whether in conducting arrangements which fall peculiarly within the woman's sphere, or in aiding her husband's purposes, it is a property highly to be valued.

Even a young unmarried person will have

opportunities of displaying energy of character : and men are so accustomed to regard the sex as incapable of power, that it is for the wife to prove that she is not wanting in resolution. A thousand daily incidents supply the test. Let her, in her own pursuits, display alacrity ; in the conduct of her family, firmness ; in the prosecution of business, vigour ; in every unlooked for crisis, presence of mind ; in efforts of duty, perseverance ; and her character will rise, above the conception which the lover may have entertained, and will realize what the husband desires and wants in his friend and coadjutor.

A woman of energy is often of incalculable value to her husband. Be he engaged in the labours of his profession — be he a student, little disposed to take part in the ordinary business of life — a woman of vigorous mind will satisfactorily transact affairs which are burthensome to him, and will relieve him from all anxiety with regard to those of her own department. The welfare of both husband and family is, in this way, almost dependent on the woman. If she possesses strength of character, she infuses life into every department ; she allows

nothing to flag; she sees to the efficiency of subordinate agents; and she provides for the good arrangement and economy of the whole establishment.

And if she also proves that she is capable of higher efforts, — that she can apply the energy she exerts on domestic affairs, to subjects which engage the powers of her husband's mind, — he will not exclude her from sharing in his more serious thoughts, and graver burthens. He will be glad to acquaint her with his resolves, and to confide to her his perplexities; for he will feel assured that he will find in her no vacillating adviser, no drag on his highest purposes, no weakener of his resolution.

“ 'Tis never woman's part
Out of her fond misgivings to perplex
The fortunes of the man to whom she cleaves :
'Tis hers to weave all that she has of fair
And bright in the dark meshes of their web
Inseparate from their windings.”

TALFOURD'S *Ion*.

A woman will show her strength of mind in the endurance of the pains and ills of life. Sickness is a sore burthen; and it is, not unfrequently, a woman's lot. It depends, however, much upon

herself, either to alleviate, or to increase the evil, as it affects her own and her husband's happiness. A calm endurance of what cannot be relieved, and the *not* yielding to weakness which may be striven against, are amongst the best restoratives to health, and the most effectual antidotes of disease; and they lighten the wearisomeness of the sick room to all who are its visitants. An invalid wife must be a great trial to a husband: but greatly is that trial increased, when there is — we will not say irritability or impatience, for this is manifestly wrong—but still no effort to overcome languor, to make the best of returning ease, to shake off the habits which indisposition has contracted. It cannot sometimes but be remarked in the married connexion, that the wife is but an indifferent partner; and yet, no fault can be found with her, but that she is always sick. The remark would scarcely be made, were there not moral weakness, as well as bodily ailment; were there not a selfish indulgence and a fanciful fostering of maladies, which a woman of greater fortitude would make but little account of; were there not a perpetual demand on her husband as a



nurse, and a tyranny, in some respects the most trying, exercised towards him, the tyranny of tenderness. But when, on the contrary, the wife meets both the lesser and the greater ills of life with courage; when suffering scarcely affects the serenity of her countenance; when toothache, cold, and headache, are borne with greater patience by her than by her husband; and when, in the more serious calamities which afflict her mortal frame, her mind still keeps up, the smile of resignation plays upon her lips, and hope imparts its lustre to her eye; then, the more she endures, the more she is beloved; for her sick chamber exhibits greater cheerfulness and content than many a scene of apparent gaiety.

The same energy will enable her to surmount difficulties or reverses. The spirit of a husband is strengthened, when, in the partner of his lot, he finds one ready to prepare for change of fortune, or to conform to it; who, in emergency, is not terrified or incapacitated; but who has wisdom to discern, and courage to pursue the line of duty; willingly sacrificing luxury, or outward show, and being ashamed of nothing but of doing wrong.

Such a woman may often rescue her family from embarrassment, or retrieve an almost ruined fortune; and, at least, will practically prove, that she has a treasure which is beyond the reach of earthly change, and that this effectually guards her against undue depression on the loss of present wealth.

Dependence, it has been remarked, is a characteristic of woman, and is one of her attractive features. But, however desirable it may be, that she should not lose this feminine recommendation,—and that she should, when married, show the value she sets on the support of her husband,—there is no reason why dependence should become helplessness; or why her claim for assistance should render her little better than an incumbrance to others. A young married woman should not indulge the idea that she can do nothing for herself. On the contrary, she should uniformly consider how she can relieve her husband; in what she need not trouble him; how far she can carry on his plans, and forward his arrangements, without drawing upon him for help. She should remember, that every unnecessary claim on him is an

interruption to his essential business ; and that the more she asks for aid in trivial matters, the less capable must he think her of important undertakings.

It is, certainly, much to be lamented, when a young wife yields to a timidity or listlessness, which prevents her from making independent efforts ; when she nurses the nervousness which unfits her for all useful services ; when, whatever be the call upon her, she is herself in need of aid ; and, from never having thought of exerting herself, is incapable of doing so, when the emergency arrives. Incidents daily occur which mark either the helplessness or capability of every woman. Sudden alarms, trifling accidents, throw one unto uncontrollable agitation ; whilst another calmly avoids or relieves the mischief. One is unable to put forth a hand to help herself ; the other, without appearance of effort, is ready to help all besides. One cannot stir without support ; the other is continually employed in some useful or benevolent purpose. One reclines upon a sofa, establishing no claim on others but her own incapacity ; the other by her perpetual good offices lays up a debt, which

is willingly paid on demand, and thus provides, in the best way, for her own future exigencies.

It not unfrequently happens, that a young married woman is oftener alone, than she has previously been accustomed to be; and that she misses the family circle, with which she has hitherto been surrounded. Let not this, however, depress her spirits; or render her too dependent on her husband for entertainment. Let it least of all lead her to seek, too frequently, relief in company. One of the first things she should learn, is to be happy in solitude; to find, there, occupation for herself; and to prove to her husband, that, however she may enjoy social intercourse, and especially desire *his* presence, she needs not either a sister or a friend to entertain her, when he is away.

It is obvious that the solitude which is the frequent lot of a young married woman, may be made peculiarly serviceable to her. In these hours of retirement, she may summon back to serious reflection thoughts which have been too much scattered upon the passing concerns of life. She may consider calmly her position and its duties; and may re-discipline her mind

with a reference to her altered circumstances. If, hitherto, she has thought too lightly, she may now consider, that the time past must suffice for frivolity and carelessness, for that she has already passed one stage in her journey through life;—or, whatever may have been the temper of her early youth, she should now reflect, that she is incurring obligations more serious, duties more important; that, if previously she has been merged in a family, she henceforward stands forth as an individual; and that, as formerly she has followed, so now will she have to give the example and the tone. Let not any young woman complain of solitude, nor flee from it. It may be, to her, a most precious opportunity. Only let her profitably improve it: and her solitude will not be lonely, nor her retirement dull. Her spirit will be calmed by it; she will learn to examine her own heart, and to correct faults of which reflection may convict her, and tempers for which, at the moment of indulgence, she may not have thought herself to blame. She will have time to meditate on all that is most serious: and she will not think the period of retirement irksome, nor

repine that she has such seasons of communing with herself.

“ On man, on nature, and on human life
Musing in solitude, she will oft perceive
Fair trains of imagery before her rise,
Accompanied by feelings of delight,
Pure, with no unpleasing sadness mixt.”*

To be thus independent, to find entertainment so readily, and at such little cost, is assuredly preferable to looking for diversion elsewhere—in unprofitable visits—or in idle discourse. There can be no question, but that in proportion as a woman is satisfied with home, will she be respected by her husband. She can scarcely please him better than by proving that she has hours of self-enjoyment; that she does not flutter about, from house to house, to get rid of time; that, even in London, in the scene of all social charms, though the consultation be long, or the debate late, she prefers a quiet evening, with no companion but her book, to the interruptions and excitements of company.

* Wordsworth.

The benefit, however, derived from solitude must depend upon the use made of it; and this involves the nature of the occupations pursued. It is possible to spend many hours alone, and yet gain no wisdom. A woman may dream away her life in dulness, as well as trifle it away in perpetual diversion. Unless solitude is improved by reflection — reflection exercised on subjects worthy of thought — the mind will gain nothing from the tranquillity it enjoys. Rather it will become more listless, and more inert; and will find itself unequal to any thing but a few family arrangements, and trifling cares.

And we may infer from this the advantage of early intellectual culture. Much has been said upon the benefit of early study; but its full profit is not reaped until maturer years. It is then that the mind, accustomed to application, finds itself furnished with ideas and with topics for its further research. It is then, too, that it discovers, that whatever leisure can be commanded, may be spent in prosecuting inquiries — the first steps of which have excited the desire of progress, — and in exploring the interior of

that Temple of science, of which the view, caught from the vestibule, has rendered us enamoured.

Every argument in favour of mental improvement will be felt to have gathered strength, as years advance. Our regret will only be, that we have not made better use of our early opportunities; that the point from which we have again to set out, is not more in advance; and that the intellect has not been invigorated by the more ardent pursuit of valuable knowledge. For we shall then experience its true importance; and discover, that in proportion to our diligence and the seriousness of our application, will be our habits of industry, and the better fitted shall we be to conduct ordinary business. That such benefit may accrue to women from intellectual pursuits, is so justly and eloquently urged by one, who did not refuse a portion of his time specially to their improvement, that we cannot but be glad to avail ourselves of his authority. It is thus, that Sir H. Davy advocates the application of the female mind to knowledge, in an inaugural Lecture addressed to the ladies of Ireland:—"By accustoming the mind to strict

reasoning, and minute observation in matters of fact, the judgment is strengthened, and rendered more acute and distinct in its application to common affairs. Unhealthy sensibilities are destroyed, and the imagination refined and exalted. The fashionable education is principally directed to those accomplishments which please only in that season of youth which, in itself, is full of fascinations; whilst it neglects the more solid endowments which give a dignity and charm to the advanced periods of life; and which, independent of external advantages, are exalted and rendered delightful by time." He further adds:—"The standard of the consideration and importance of females in society is, I believe, likewise the standard of civilisation. The leisure of the higher classes is so great, their influence so strong, that it is almost their duty to endeavour to awaken and keep alive the love of improvement. It is only ignorance or selfishness, which can wish to prevent the diffusion of knowledge. It is the grand privilege of human nature; it is the lamp which guides our steps amidst the obscurity of things; which preserves the mind awake to its just interests; carrying it, from

transient and trifling objects, to those which are permanent and useful; affording a noble employment in youth, a delightful consolation in age; teaching that, in all things, there is order, and harmony, and wisdom; exalting the sensual into the intellectual, and the intellectual into the moral and religious being." *

There can be no doubt but that, by such knowledge, a woman renders herself a far more suitable companion to her husband, provided he is himself addicted to intellectual pursuits, than she can be, if she occupies herself only with inferior objects. What congeniality can there be, between a man, who not only by profession is a student, but whose vacant hours are cherished for purposes of mental improvement, and the woman, who lives the day long, without one elevated thought,—and who, if she ever reads, selects her book with a view only to passing entertainment. Few can be the topics of mutual interest, and scanty the materials for conversation. The husband naturally abridges the hours of domestic society, and, retiring to his own

* Dr. Davy's Life of Sir Humphry Davy.

thoughts, leaves his partner to the petty occupations, and the vacuity of mind, which are, to her, habitual.

It will be found that the respect entertained by a husband for the wife he loves, is, in great measure, determined by the pursuits she chooses. It is from her own selection, that he judges of the character of her mind. If he sees, that, when left to her own guidance, she apportions her leisure to worthy objects; that in knowledge she seeks an elevated range; that the employments she proposes to herself are morally and intellectually beneficial; he will entertain for her a far higher sentiment, than if the choice of her occupations indicated an inferior mind. It is from thus becoming acquainted with the true dignity of her character, that friendship will become engrafted upon love, and that these sentiments will mutually fortify each other.

In short, it should be, as has been already stated, the object of the married woman to raise herself, by every means, in the esteem of her husband. This is her wisdom as well as duty; and thus, far more than by insisting upon her own way, or urging her own claims, she will

secure a voice in her husband's counsels, and a place in his tenderest consideration.

A Christian wife, of course, knows, that the duty she has incurred to her husband is first in the list of social obligations. It is illustrative of the mercy and harmony of the Divine plan, that, to the virtuous, happiness should be, not merely the future reward of duty, but its concomitant. And in no relation is this more strikingly exemplified, than in the marriage union. Obedience, in a woman, is only the expression of her love; and her love is her felicity.

And, as she will not have undertaken so binding a duty without an assurance that its performance will involve no obstruction to the *first* homage of her heart, so will she find that her Christian progress may be advanced by an association with one qualified to guide, as well as accompany, her journey towards heaven. No doubt, the way will be rendered more smooth, more sweet, by companionship; the services of Christian piety more glowing, and full of life, by sympathy; the pure flame, kindled in each, by the celestial ray, will quicken by conjunction;

and the fruition in part vouchsafed, and in its fulness assured, of Him, — the Wisdom, and the Truth, — will be more nearly attained by united efforts to understand revealed mysteries, and to “know the Love which passeth knowledge.”

Both will feel that their affection binds them to heaven, not to earth; and that, whilst it is the solace of their lives, it is no idol-worship; but identified with their desire for Him, whom in all created good they taste—Himself the uncreated object of their soul’s immortal thirst. For—

————— “ they can find no rest
In that which perishes, nor will they lend
Their hearts to aught which doth on Time depend.
'Tis sense, unbridled will, and not true Love,
Which kills the soul: Love betters what is best
Even here below, but more in Heav’n above.”*

Wordsworth.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE YOUNG MOTHER.

THERE is no sentiment so suddenly called forth as maternal affection. It is, in fact, as we all know, instinctive, and, therefore, common to almost every order of animal being; but, in the human subject, it is far more than a mere natural impulse. As such, it may even be weaker in us, than in inferior creatures;—but reason and principle add so greatly to its power, that it becomes one of the strongest and most influential passions, of which we are susceptible.

Maternal affection, however suddenly excited, gathers strength from exercise. It is, at first, so new and strange a feeling, that half its solicitudes are not known. The young mother, as she first caresses the little one that claims her love, is ignorant in great measure of the care it needs, and of the dangers that surround it. She knows but a small part of the attention that

will be required from her. But as the very demand for such care engenders tenderness, so every fresh display of it augments the feeling. The experienced mother, an adept in vigilance, loves as she watches, and watches as she loves; and whilst she tends her youngest nursling with provident fondness, bestows on each of her children the growing fulness of her matured affection.

The knowledge, indeed, of all that a beloved object stands in need of, and of its dependence, increases the affection, on which it makes its claim. Thus, the Divine Parent considers the innumerable wants and perils of the living souls who owe to him their being; and as his acquaintance with their necessities is infinite, so, too, is his solicitude and love.

Maternal affection is an intense feeling. None but mothers know its depths. That it should be a sentiment, profound and lasting, is beneficently ordered; for such a feeling only will sustain the trials it must undergo. The watchings, the toil, which accompany even the earliest years of infancy, would exhaust an affection less ardent. But the well, from whence

the spring is started, is fathomless; and the stream perennial, and without ebb. And if, in the eternity of Divine affection only, is to be found faithfulness more constant, do we not perceive from such comparison, how powerful is the mother's love. "Can a woman forget her sucking child? . . . Yes, she may forget; but I will not forget thee."

There is much sublimity in maternal love. Its unweariedness, its self-devotion, its fortitude, belong to the highest points of human character, and are themselves virtues which exalt the soul. And, to take a lower view;—it is a graceful, a poetic sentiment. We think of it in association with the graces of infancy which call it forth, with the first smile which repays the mother's care, the first utterance that lisps her cherished name. Such sweet appeals can be addressed only to a feeling delicate as they are; and the response they awaken, is a gentle emotion which claims kindred with our finest sympathies. The youthful mother, as she courts the playful glances of her infant, or watches the soft sleep that steals upon its closing eyelids, is herself the subject of a warm and

pure enthusiasm; she is awake to the tenderest sensibilities, and is capable of the most disinterested devotedness to the object of her attachment.

The sentiment needs no prompting. It comes unsolicited, save by the cry that meets the mother's ear, the look of helpless love that turns upon her. And the anxieties it gives rise to, are of spontaneous growth, and intrude themselves, unbidden, on her thoughts. With reference to these, indeed, it is her duty to guard against herself; and to oppose to the apprehensions which may oppress her mind, the principles which only can allay them.

The Christian mother, if she has anxieties peculiarly her own, has also her peculiar comfort. It is incumbent on her to avail herself of this her privilege; and, as a remedy to all solitudes—to those of a religious nature, and those which are common to every parent—to exercise implicit trust in the Highest Power.

Maternal love is peculiarly of an *anxious* character. That this should be its quality, is another indication of the wisdom of Him that gave it this complexion. Of other love equally,

even more ardent, solicitude is not, in the same way, the prominent feature. But the suggestion of danger is perpetually offering itself to the mother's busy mind; and prompts the forethought which guards against mischief, and quickens the ear to the call for help.

It is, however, essential to her peace, and to the well-being of those she loves, to keep her anxiety in check. It is for her to call into practical efficiency the belief she professes in the providence of God, and in His special protection.

For, unless she does thus really repose in Him, her faith is merely nominal. If, after forethought wisely exercised, she is still perplexed with distressing apprehensions; if, to judicious precaution she superadds excessive and vexatious care; if, not satisfied with ordinary safeguards, she provokes notice by her unusual and uncalled for preventatives; she surely gives but feeble evidence of her trust in God; she seems as if she would leave but little for Infinite Wisdom to provide for, and Infinite Love to guard.

And, after all, how little can all her fore-

thought do? It is indeed true, that perils meet us at every step. And when we think of the helplessness of infancy, and the heedlessness of youth; when we look at the fragile form which a touch may bruise; the little tottering footsteps which a straw may throw off their balance; when we consider the "hairbreadth 'scapes" of boyhood; the perils which foresight could not avoid, and which rashness seems to court; the wonder is, that the promise of early years is ever realised, and that the tender limbs expand and grow into maturity. Where can we say that our little ones are safe? Has not the infant sprung through an open window from its nurse's arms? Has not the child played with the tempting berries, and tasting them, found its death? Has not the harmless toy—the ball, the arrow—been charged with mischief; and the sport terminated in loss of sense or limb? And, if such casualties do not befall,—who shall guard against sickness? The noxious blast of epidemic comes in through the crevice; or the deceitful sunshine of a vernal day gives fever; or the innate disease—inevitable, incurable—shows its fatal symptom, and spreads

its slow but deadly poison through the frame. "By every thing in providence, and every thing in manners, by every thing in nature, and every thing in chance *," early life is threatened; and what shield can we interpose, that can guard against the subtle shaft?

But shall we therefore yield to tormenting fears? Shall we enjoy no freedom from *solicitude*; but indulge in painful fancies, and anticipate every variety of ill? Rather shall we not consider our liability to danger, as the ground of trust in Omnipotence; and the exposure to casualty, as involving the certainty of Divine superintendence?

The remark was once thoughtlessly made—"One would *almost* think that a special Providence watches over children." *Almost*, shall we say?—Were it not for a special Providence, what child would pass safely through the hazards of a single day? Were it not for a special Providence, when we send our little tribe to take their daily walks, what guarantee have we for their safe return? Were it not for a special

* Taylor's Holy Dying.

Providence, what ground has the fond mother, when she parts with her schoolboy, when she bestows on him her farewell kiss, and brushes off the tear that dims her eye, to hope, that she will again fold him to her bosom, and welcome him, grown and matured, to the Christmas board? It is indeed a special Providence that watches over children. It is a Providence, not a chance, that made and rules the world; a Providence, not a chance, that regulates its concerns. And as this universe, with its laws, harmonies, and systems, is not the accident of an accident; but the execution of a plan, originated and pourtrayed in the One Uncreated Mind; so, its minutest arrangements, its least events, are not fortuitous, but the results of the same Intelligence, and, in the microscopic eye of Infinite Wisdom, essential to the completeness of his economy. Therefore, shall we not believe, that "the hairs of our little ones are numbered?"

And surely this persuasion, whilst it allays fears, will excite to a devotional spirit. When the mother looks upon her children with the affectionate solicitude that marks her ties, she

will find her peace in commending them to the care which is better than her own. When she greets them, day after day, with glowing cheeks ; hears, in their sportive voices, the glad indication of happiness and health ; sees, in the beaming eye, the promise of intelligence ; should not her heart expand in thankfulness to Him, to whose continued goodness she is indebted for blessings, not the less prized, because, to her, they are of ordinary occurrence.

But, should such calm enjoyment not be hers. Should it be her lot to mark the progress of pining sickness ; to watch her infant's fevered slumbers, to cool its burning head ; and, after all her painful attentions, to see it lay its cheek upon its pillow, and sleep its long, unbroken, sleep ; still, shall she not confess, that the same special Providence kept her child. She will imprint her last kiss upon its marble form,

Pallida nò, ma più di morte bianca ;

will take her last look of its apparently chiselled features : but, oh ! there must be no bitterness in her tears ; for the Everlasting arms are underneath her child ; and it has been borne on

the feathered pinions of the swiftest ministers of light, to a bosom of more perfect love than ever hers could be. She will think of it, as of a cherub before the throne, the first fruits of her own company; as an earnest of their entrance into the same joy; as a part of the portion, reserved above for herself, and the partner of her grief. The hope of re-embracing their lost one, will be to the parents, an added ingredient in their anticipated bliss;—for they cherish the assurance, that its place will be in the elect band of virgin souls, “in whose mouth is found no guile, and who are without fault, before God.” *

In this confidence the mother will rest, and will not dwell with sorrow on her loss. It is true she has received a wound; but the oil and the wine are ready to pour in. And she will prove at once, that her spirit is not depressed, nor her force abated; that she is as ready for duty or exertion as before; and that her cheerfulness is not diminished, because one of her little flock is translated to the fold above.

* Rev. xiv. 5.

Maternal solicitude is, doubtless, quickened by the experience of the loss of children, or by their apparent delicacy. It is, however, no unimportant duty to guard against excess of fear. Besides that it interrupts all enjoyment of present blessings, it confines the mind to one subject ; and incapacitates it for all general and useful effort.

Even for the sake of those, who thus engage their interest, it is incumbent on mothers to beware of over-wrought attention. There is nothing more likely to produce illness than the perpetual treatment of children as invalids. The anxiety depicted on the mother's countenance — the indulgence that grants or forestalls every wish — the perpetual nursing which, to a grain, apportions medicine, exercise, and food— all make their impression on the poor patient, and increase the susceptibility of disease. In cases of predisposition to sickness, it is well known, that a happy moral temperament is the best corrective of the constitutional bias ; and such can never be the condition of a petted child. For those children, only, can be happy, who have learnt the secret of content ; who are

not perpetually excited by the presentation of fresh amusements, by the gratification of every whim; but, who acquire calmness by self-control, and cheerfulness by being satisfied with easily procured pleasures.

In cases of protracted sickness, a mother's duty may be difficult and trying. With all the tender care she must bestow on one object, still she should not forget, that others require her regard. She should not be so absorbed in nursing, that her husband should miss her attentions; or, when he returns to his home, weary with his daily avocations, should find no cheerful companion to dissipate his cares. Nor should she expect from him more sympathy or aid, than he can properly give. For his important duties, for the station he has to occupy, he must not be disqualified; and, though he would willingly watch with her the little sufferer's couch, the office is scarcely one, which he should be allowed to fill. *She* is the appropriate nurse; and, for her husband and her family's sake—for the sake too of the precious one, whom sickness has doubly endeared—her endeavour should be to preserve that buoyancy

of spirit, which will enable her to go through her trial with equanimity, and to fulfil other claims without omission.

Other causes besides health may tempt mothers to undue anxiety. The effect is equally to be lamented. It is natural to every parent to think none so worthy of interest as her own little ones; and the impression is not without utility. But it should not be made obvious to the children; nor should it be unguardedly and exclusively indulged. Family selfishness appears almost as unamiable, to those unconnected with us, as personal selfishness; and, in some respects, seems almost more engrossing. Besides, the excessive partiality of parents often excites a prejudice against those on whom it is lavished; and others are not disposed to bestow their interest on the monopolisers of home favour. Whatever cause there may be for making much of children, it is, indeed, by no means, favourable to themselves; and mothers, if judicious, will therefore learn to repress the excess of their anxiety.

With reference to education it may be said

that a parent can scarcely be too solicitous. Still, even here, the earnestness may be of too restless a nature. In education we should never be in a hurry. If, as has been said, an attempt at too much learning is prejudicial to young people at any period, a forcing of the mind in the tenderest years is especially injurious. There is danger, to both mind and body, in the effort. For all undue excitement should be avoided, at a period when the brain is peculiarly susceptible of injury, and when fatigue is even more detrimental than want of exercise.

Very little benefit accrues from premature learning. It is a common saying, that a forward child does no more, in after years, than keep pace with his contemporaries. And this implies that the opening faculties are not improved by too lavish culture.

The object of early education should be, gradually to unfold the mind, and strengthen its powers. This is a task, which pleasingly devolves upon the mother. It is for her to call forth the nascent intelligence, to excite and satisfy the infant curiosity.

The effect of instruction even at the earliest age, as conducted by different individuals, is remarkable. Mechanical learning all may impart with equal success: nay, persons of inferior ability may perhaps execute the ordinary routine better than those whose minds are more energetic. But considerable skill will be required to seize the prominent points to which attention should be directed, to simplify explanations, and to prepare the understanding and the reason for the work of future years.

Not that mothers should foster in their children an idle or troublesome inquisitiveness. Impertinent questions should be checked as carefully, as pertinent inquiries should be encouraged. In this, as well as many other points, the treatment, of course, should be suited to the differences in individual children. One little one is satisfied to fulfil his task without a question, and after he has said his lesson may not be wiser than before. Another flies off, at every point, into some new field, and can scarcely accomplish his allotted exercise from eagerness to follow up the inquiries, which his discursive mind has suggested. To rouse the fa-

culties of the one, without lessening his steadiness ; to discipline, without destroying the exuberant vivacity of the other, is the work of a judicious and superior guide.

We must be ourselves proficient, if we would be good teachers ; and even elementary instruction is conveyed by those who are adepts, in a manner that marks their skill. It would seem, often, as if there were an aptitude, in children, to seize a weak point. Their questions go deeper than they are themselves aware of ; and they are by no means inexpert in detecting an error, when such is attempted to be imposed upon them. A person of high attainments, therefore, need not scruple, in matters where she may not happen to be informed, to avow her want of knowledge : she can afford to say, “ I cannot tell you ;” for her tone of mind, and general ability, have so established her authority, that she will not endanger it by confessing her ignorance on a particular point.

Thus, in very early years, we can understand how dependent the real progress of children is upon the character and habits of their mothers. If, when they are with her, they are themselves

led to make sensible remarks ; if the conversation they hear is intelligent and elevating ; if they see her occupied not with trivial pleasures, but with important objects and superior pursuits ; they attain, insensibly, a thirst for knowledge, a love of virtue, and a desire for improvement. The early impression may, no doubt, be weakened ; the good seed may become choked by weeds ; the tares, inveterate in the soil, may spring up and predominate over the first crop ; but the children of such a mother will recollect the impression that her example made in their years of tenderness, and the bias she then gave to their consciences and minds. The little infant, before it can speak, ordinarily gives pretty sure indication of the skill and activity of its nurse ; so the child, in its next stage, reflects with tolerable accuracy the character of its mother : and though, of course, allowance must be made for natural differences, for the opportunities of intercourse with parents, and other incidental circumstances ; still the intelligent countenance, the open brow, the accurate answer, give a favourable impression of domestic culture, and prepossess us in behalf, not only

of the fine plant they adorn, but of the maternal care with which it has been nurtured.

Incidental instruction is peculiarly adapted to very early years. And this is conveyed, in the best manner, by persons of superior mind. Objects of perpetual occurrence, — daily events, — may thus be improved to impart knowledge, or teach an important lesson. Both these ends should, however, be brought about naturally and familiarly. A well-stored mind can perpetually recall some useful association, can elucidate some process in nature, can illustrate some religious or moral truth, in noticing passing occurrences. And thus knowledge the most valuable may be brought to the level of very young capacities, and a habit also established of profiting by casual incidents.

Intelligent mothers have pleasure in observing and treasuring up remarks which may well appear to exceed the supposed limit of a child's mind. These remarks have often reference to invisible objects, and are called forth by religious instruction. And, in truth, it must strike all who, in the early period of their children's

lives, endeavour to impart spiritual knowledge, that the mysteries of faith are often received and entered into by their young disciples, in a manner more encouraging than could be expected from their years. They do not shrink from the doctrines propounded to them : it is true they receive them, on authority ; still believing, they seek to understand ; and often they do *so* understand, as to convince us that, in scriptural truth there is accommodation to the human mind, and in the mind a need for scriptural truth. A child who is cognizant of nothing but the world around him, and is puzzled with much that he beholds, hears of the mysteries of his spiritual being—of the transcendent doctrines which unfold the nature of the Invisible God—and receives them without amazement, and without doubting. Nor is it that his mind is not engaged and interested. There may be, in some children, indifference ; but often it is quite otherwise. Young learners will frequently show peculiar interest in these subjects ; will pursue them with eagerness, and will manifest, with reference to them, great clearness of thought. They will ask questions which will prove their appre-

hension of the instruction that has been conveyed, and their power of following it out ; and at the same time will evince a teachableness which may put to shame the intractability of future years. And, in thus inviting the young mind to religious inquiries, we shall be reminded of the blessing promised to those who, "like a little child, receive the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;" and shall wish that, as the capacity enlarges, there may be a proportionate ability to understand and entertain them.

There can be no question, therefore, of the propriety of improving this direction of the mind to the highest objects. In truth, there is an opportunity, in childhood, of laying the grounds of faith, which may never afterwards be so well afforded. With boys especially, the mothers may, at no subsequent period, have so favourable an occasion, or possess so strong a hold upon the mind.

But the instruction which is here intended, is not that which is conveyed by stated lessons. It is that which distils warm from the lips and heart of the teacher, and which is responded

to by the disciple, with all the freeness and simplicity of infantile remark. Thus, interest is kept up, and the child receives the most important knowledge, unconscious of the reach which its own mind is essaying. There should ever be caution not to press the attention too much, and to avoid all approach to fatigue. Religious instruction or conversation should be looked upon as a pleasure, and should be introduced with ease, and kept up without effort. If pursued to exhaustion, the benefit will be lost; and a distaste for it probably contracted.

Again: in endeavouring to bring spiritual subjects to the level of our children's minds, we must beware of so lowering them, as to take off from the reverence with which they should be regarded. Our language, in communicating them, though simple and child-like, should still be solemn and serious; our illustrations, though apt and familiar, not undignified, nor mean. Let us not attempt to strip sublime truths of their halo of mystery, nor to reduce them to the *sensible* apprehensions of our children. In illustration, we must be on our guard to convey no erroneous impression; not to allow



analogy to be carried beyond the point of resemblance ; and especially not to propose a similitude, where the likeness does not hold. Experienced reasoners will detect a fallacy, when it occurs, in these modes of arguing or explaining ; but the young mind may soon be led astray ; and, pleased at the familiarity of the figure, at the prospect of understanding, by its means, what before seemed abstruse, will not perceive that it is venturing on doubtful ground.

It may be expected that a mother's instruction, will be of an affectionate nature. This, indeed, is one of its great recommendations. To teach the young mind that religion is the most exalted love ; to inspire a confidence in God ; to impress on the heart, the image of Him who " took little children in his arms, and blessed them ;" this should be the aim of the Christian mother, that she may win to their legitimate object the earliest affections ; and elevate, and convert to a still higher purpose, the sentiment entertained towards herself. The tenderness lavished by a child on its earthly parent, is the aptest

image she can present of the love to be felt towards the Author of all; and the assurance experienced of the unwearied interest of a mother, is a figure of the implicit trust to be reposed in the Heavenly Parent.

“Untaught, yet wise, 'mid all thy brief alarms,
Thou closely clingest to thy mother's arms.” *

By her own maternal tenderness let her teach the still greater love of Him who, with infinite solicitude, cares for all his creatures; and by her own readiness to pardon, his mercy, who, at such cost, provided a ransom for his erring children. By the unprompted affection which her children entertain towards herself, let her illustrate the sentiment due to God; and by their fearless approach to her indulgent arms, inculcate reliance upon Him, whom, in the tender spirit of adoption, they are to call, Abba, Father.

The tendency of such instruction in the nursery, is to produce a spirit of love; the principle of all the charities of life. By this, the Christian mother will strive to regulate

* Coleridge, Sonnet to his Infant.



the tempers of her infant train. It is true, that, in children, unity of motive can scarcely be maintained; and therefore consistency cannot always be expected. Present impressions are often too strong for reason and conviction; and the little delinquent, conscious of its fault, and of its consequence, has still not sufficient self-control to overcome the wrong impulse. To meet this, immediate authority must interpose—authority, calmly yet firmly exerted—which appeals to the sentiment of veneration, whilst it increases filial love.

Mutual affection is the invariable symptom of a well-regulated family. It is the proof, in children, of an amiable heart, and of moderate desires. The bickerings which disturb the peace of some nurseries, are chiefly occasioned by indulgence, and by the exuberant supply of whatever may minister to fictitious wants. Toys are often little better than apples of discord; and the choicer and more numerous, the more disunion do they create. Moderation in such gratifications practically teaches temperance in greater things; and contentment

with simple pleasures in childhood, is the germ and promise of future equanimity.

But if, in whatever furnishes entertainment, there should be moderation, the same abstinence should be exercised in dress. Mothers, who are by no means extravagant in their own personal decoration, are occasionally too lavish on their children. They scruple not to expend, upon an infant's toilette, a far larger proportion of care and money, than they would think it right to bestow upon their own. A baby's wardrobe is, doubtless, a pretty plaything; but it may be a very costly one; and, when furnished according to the most approved model, is a specimen of elaborate expenditure for very little use.

It may, perhaps, be defended, on the plea that, as the infant is unconscious, no danger accrues to it from the harmless indulgence of a mother's taste. Still, the system, if faulty, should not be commenced. It is not, indeed, on the score of the child only, that it is wrong. But, if it be not an indication in the parent, of a trifling mind, it is, at least, a symptom of injudicious fondness; a fondness which will, it may be feared, tend to a pampering of the fancy, and

to an indulgence in more hurtful extravagance.

It is, however, by no means necessary, that, because prodigality is shunned, neatness and elegance should not be realised. A simple attire, for a child, is, in fact, the most graceful; and the unencumbered dress is far more becoming than the gorgeous and ornamented one. And though vanity does not depend upon the quality of the frock, but may be as rife in stuff as in velvet; still the mother will best consult the well-being of her little ones, who, in their appearance, is studious of simplicity rather than decoration, and of health and freedom rather than show.

A young mother not unfrequently harasses herself by a variety of counsellors. In her anxiety for her infant, she wishes to gain from the experience of others, what she fears she is deficient in herself; and therefore asks advice of all who, she thinks, may help her. The probability is, that she gains no good. She is burthened with receipts for diet — with remedies for infantile complaints; she hears from one of an infallible specific, and receives from another

a caution against its use ; she is told by one to send her children out in all weather, by another, to keep them at home ; and whilst conversation is thus exclusive, and uninteresting to all whom it does not concern, she is herself only perplexed by the contradiction of her advisers. A sound judgment is the best guide for the management of children ; and this, aided by the experience which none can communicate, of the peculiar constitution of families and of their individual members, will impart to mothers a skill to be derived from no other source.

The mother's influence is established at the earliest age ; and the impression of her character is the first which children receive. The nature and endurance of the sentiment depends on points which indicate either her superiority or her weakness. A son especially, accepts at a late period her guidance or not, as he estimates her tone of mind. Can a mother have stronger inducement to moral and intellectual advance ? By her maternal affection, by her anxiety for the good conduct of those of her children who are exposed to the greater hazard, by her especial love for her first born,

her husband's cherished representative, whose example may determine the career of his younger brethren, and lead them to mischief or to good, by the responsibility she incurs for souls, by birth committed to her care, she is bound to strive after that excellence, which, as it fits her to be her children's first instructress, so will it render her, in an after period, their chosen friend.

The parental relationship marks the commencement of a second era in life. As such, it must excite serious, if not sad reflections. The young mother sees, in each of her little groups, the picture of what she was herself but yesterday. The same playfulness, the same ardour, the same quick transitions from grief to joy, from pain to pleasure, are fresh in her own remembrance, and appear as her late experience. Does she see her children in the same spots which her own childhood witnessed — spots, with reference to inanimate creation, still unchanged? She seems to live over again in them her early ex-

istence ; and to sympathise with them, in the same simple tastes which occupied and interested her first years.

But a change has passed over her, and every epoch brings more sure and more startling indications of the change. The Parent, of whose first and latest thought she was the object, perhaps, lives, for her, only in her tenderest, and most hallowed recollections ;—the Guide, the friend of her youth, from whose lips dropped heavenly wisdom, whose example was a bright and cheering pattern, who pointed to the glory seen by faith, and led the way, has “entered into his rest ;”—even of her former compeers and associates, the companions of her childhood and her youth, on whom life opened with its fairest promise,—of these, younger even than herself,—one is taken, and another left. And she must feel, that her own progress to the grave becomes more rapid ; that every year brings fresh symptoms of decline ; that, though now surrounded by objects of endearment, by duties, by blessings,—now enjoying ability of mind and body,—she and all she loves are on their journey to a bourne which involves the

separation from earthly objects, and the dissolution of this mortal frame.

Still these thoughts, solemn though they are, should occasion her no gloom.

“ Before her still, a lingering ray appears,

But broken and prismatic, seen through tears

The light of joy and immortality.” *

With such a star in sight, there can be no darkness; before so glorious a vision, the intervening cloud melts away. The friends she may have lost are her precursors to the mansions of the blest; those that remain are her fellow travellers, or may be her followers, to the same abode. If she becomes more sensible of the precariousness of present blessings, their continuance calls forth the greater gratitude; if all earthly joys are mellowed, they are, therefore, the less dangerous. With a mind disciplined by wisdom from on high, instructed by every change in condition and incident in life, matured by an acquaintance with human character, and the experience, in it, of good or ill, she is qualified to maintain, through Divine Grace, her own course uprightly, and to aid

* Sir H. Davy.

and direct the steps of others. *She will, to the last, enjoy the goodness of God in the refractions he has provided; to the last, receive and taste the cup which his bounteous hand has filled;—and, when he sees fit to call her to home, she will, with a glad heart, obey his summons, and leave behind her a memorial of his faithfulness and truth.*

THE END.

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